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REMINISCENCES AND REFLECTIONS.

REMINISCENCES

AND

REFLECTIONS,

REFERRING TO HIS EARLY MINISTRY
IN THE PARISH OF ROW,
1825-31.

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BY THE LATE

JOHN McLEOD CAMPBELL, D.D.

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVE,
BY HIS SON,

DONALD CAMPBELL, M.A.,
CHAPLAIN OF KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON.

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TO THE READER.

MY father was engaged in writing this book during the greater part of the last year of his life, and it was left unfinished at the time of his death in February last.

The incomplete state in which the book was left has not been thought a sufficient reason for withholding it from publication. For it is probable that these "Reminiscences" would have retained something of their present fragmentary character even if my father had lived to complete the task which he had undertaken. From the first he disclaimed any intention of writing a systematic work; and his chief object was to place on record thoughts which might prove helpful to others, rather than to give a continuous account of his ministry at Row.

He at one time entertained the idea of publishing the book in separate parts, as he might be able to complete them; and the fact that he thought of doing so seems to be an additional reason for not hesitating to publish, even in its unfinished form, that part of the work which he was permitted to accomplish.

At the same time, it will be readily understood that some difficulties have been encountered in preparing what he had written for the press. The order of writing was not the order of the thought; and, although some help was afforded by a memorandum, in which he had recorded his "purpose as to the order of topics," the help was available only for a part of the book.

Wishing to spare no pains in making his meaning clear, he often went back upon what he had already written, and expressed many thoughts in several different forms. With reference to such alternative passages, it has been thought better to err on the side of retaining than on the side of omitting. While passages have been omitted which were simply repetitions of the same thoughts in nearly the same words, others have been retained in which,

with some repetition, there was also something peculiar to each passage which seemed worth preserving.

It is unnecessary to explain in detail how far the order in which these papers have been arranged differs from that in which they were written. Some particulars will be found stated in a note at the end of Part II.

It has been thought desirable by those in whose opinion I have confidence, that these "Reminiscences" should be prefaced by a narrative of those facts in my father's life with which the reader might naturally wish to be acquainted. It is hardly necessary to say that this narrative is not intended to have anything of the character of a *life*.

D. CAMPBELL.

LONDON, *December*, 1872.

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INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVE.

ERRATA.

Page 71, line 11—For "*if more deeply a self-realized, destroying desfair,*" read *if more deeply realized, a self-destroying despair.*

Page 83, line 8—For "*intensify,*" read *intensifying.*

Page 85, line 6—For "*look out the scene,*" read *look out on the scene.*

INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVE.

JOHN M°LEOD CAMPBELL was born at Ardmaddy House, near Kilninver, Argyllshire, on the 4th of May, 1800. He was the eldest son of the Rev. Donald Campbell, who had lately been appointed Minister of the United Parish of Kilninver and Kilmelford, but had not yet taken possession of the Manse. It thus happened that Kilninver was not my father's birthplace, although it was his home almost from the first.

His father, who was born at Corlarach, near Dunvegan, in Skye, was educated at the University of Aberdeen, where he was the fellow-student and friend of Robert Hall and James Mackintosh. He took a high place at college, and acquired that familiar acquaintance with Virgil, Ovid, and Horace, which was afterwards turned to good account in the education of his son. He retained through life a strong regard for his old Professor, Dr. George Campbell, the courteous antagonist of Hume. He married Mary M'Leod,

youngest daughter of M'Leod of Raasay. She died in April, 1806, leaving three children, John, Donald, and Jean Mary.

My father attended the Parish School, but he seems to have received the most important part of his early education from his father. At the age of eight he was reading Cæsar, and his Sunday task, a few years later, was to learn by heart one of George Buchanan's Latin Psalms.

In November, 1811, he and his brother were taken by their father to Glasgow, and matriculated as students of the University. The first six years of my father's course were spent in the "Arts Classes," and he gained prizes in Logic (1815), and Moral Philosophy (1816). In 1817 he entered the Divinity Hall. At this point begins that series of letters to his father, which forms a continuous autobiography until his father's death in 1843.

In these letters are recorded many interesting passages in his student-life; but the limits of this sketch will permit only a very sparing use of these materials. In one letter, written from Johnson's Inn, Canal Basin, Lochgilphead, we find the two brothers on their way to College. "A good fire, a bad pen, a wretched sheet of paper" were "the only substitutes for a comfortable bed." After describing the group seated by the fire, he adds:—"My dear father, I assure you it makes me very dull to think of your loneliness at Kilninver. I hope you may

really take a share of our Christmas goose in Glasgow; but don't on any account come by the ferries: they must be extremely dangerous at that season. . . . You will direct to me as 'Student of Divinity.'"

In a letter written in December, 1817, we have the following account of his studies:—

"I never had so much to do. I rise at six and sit up till twelve. The following is the distribution of my time:—From six to eight in the morning, French at home; from eight to half-past nine I walk (but this hour will soon be occupied with the Natural Philosophy, where I must make up what I lost last year*); to ten breakfast; ten to eleven, Hebrew; eleven to twelve, read some English author at home; twelve to one, Divinity Hall; one to two, Private Latin; two to three, French Class; three to four, dinner; four to five, Natural History Class; from five to six, read a chapter in the Greek Testament (and if I fall behind during the week make it up on Sunday); six to eight, Hebrew; eight to nine, Political Economy; nine to twelve, supper and reading for the Divinity Hall. Thus I am completely engaged, even though I have my preparation for the French done with candle-light in the morning. If ever I am to get into habits of study, 'tis this winter—and I hope I may continue them."

It will be noticed that, with the exception of Hebrew and Divinity, these subjects lay outside of the prescribed course of study; they were taken

* The allusion is to a fever which prevented him from attending College during part of the Session 1816-17.

up simply from the young student's eager thirst for knowledge. In the "Reminiscences," he speaks of the life of boyhood and youth as "succeeded by years of active self-culture, and the consciousness of responsibility for the use made of time"—words which refer, doubtless, to such studies as are detailed in this letter.

In January, 1818, his father's mother died at Kilninver at the age of ninety-six. She had spent the last twelve years of her life in her son's home, having left Skye soon after the death of her husband. In a letter written to his father at this time, he speaks thus of her death:—"All her tenderness to us came to sadden the thought that she was not again to receive us with the fond welcome which used to greet our return to Kilninver. . . . I cannot but feel a pleasure in thinking that she had your presence to sweeten the last drops of the cup of life."

"We are all very busy" (he says in the same letter). "I had the pleasure of reading a chapter of the Bible in the language in which it was first written for the first time last Sunday. It was revising what we had done during the week. I find the Hebrew a pleasant, and not a difficult study. I am continually finding coincidences between it and the Gaelic which are very striking."

About the beginning of 1819 his sister left for India. The long letters which he wrote to her

after her departure shew how keenly he felt the pain of separation.

On the 1st of May, 1820, he completed his course at Glasgow, gaining a prize for an essay on Hebrew Poetry. About the same time, he passed the first of his "trials" before the Presbytery of Lorn. All that remained to complete the necessary preparation for receiving licence as a preacher, was the "partial session." "I mean, however," he writes, "to make next winter a full session in order to have it in my power to attend other classes, to which I have not yet given my attention." He carried out this intention—not, however, in Glasgow, but in Edinburgh. Political Economy, Natural History, and Chemistry, were some of the subjects which he studied, either in Edinburgh or Glasgow, in addition to his theological reading.

His most intimate college friend was William Penney, now Lord Kinloch. Their friendship dated from the day when they were competitors for the same prize in the Logic Class in 1815; and he is the "valued friend" of whom he speaks (in Part II., Chap. viii.) as having given him a copy of Edwards on the Religious Affections, which he studied "for his sake who gave it," as well as on account of its authorship.

On July 16th, 1821, he was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of Lorn, and about ten days later he preached his first sermon, in Gaelic, in

the Parish Church of Kilninver. "I delivered my Gaelic sermon," he writes, "without my paper, and got through it pretty well. I believe the people were pleased: they were, I know, prepared to be so; and it would have been difficult for me to have sent them away much dissatisfied."

In another letter (to his sister) he says, "Every eye was fixed on me, and yet there was so much kindness and friendly interest mingled with the curiosity of the look that, after the first moment it encouraged me... I did not, however, *possess myself* during the whole service.... The only person* to support me was my friend William Penney. His presence was a great comfort."

During the four years that elapsed before his ordination as minister of Row, my father had no fixed sphere of work, such as those preachers have who act as assistants to parish ministers,—an office which seems to have been less common in those days than it is now. He was not, however, idle: he frequently preached for his father, and for other ministers in the neighbourhood. Part of the year he spent in Edinburgh, preaching occasionally for his friend Dr. Muir; and he continued to read diligently, not limiting his attention to theological works. This appears from a letter dated Edinburgh, 14th February, 1824, which contains the following:—"I am at present very busy reading various books which, if called hence, I may

* His father was from home.

not have at my command. I had a very rich treat lately in your friend Dr. Campbell's 'Lectures on Rhetoric.' Had he written directly and professedly on the philosophy of mind, he would have left a more valuable system than Reid, Stewart, or Brown. I feel a peculiar delight in Campbell. From his having been your professor, I feel as if he had been my own. 'Butler's Analogy' is also a most able and a most valuable book. I never was busier, though I don't compose any. But I take notes in reading the Bible and also keep a book for all the *general views* which occur to me."

It was in the spring of 1824 that my father first went to England. After a stormy passage in a smack, he sailed up the Thames on a Sunday morning. His feelings were hurt "by the little effect the coming in of Sunday had on the river;" he was "perfectly shocked by the sight of four men suspended in chains at Blackwall;" then "enchanted with Greenwich Hospital," where he landed. On his way back from London, where he spent some weeks, he visited Oxford, Stratford-on-Avon, and Chester.

In May, 1825, he was presented to the parish of Row by the Duke of Argyll—the uncle of the present Duke.

In September he was ordained minister of Row. He never forgot the testimony borne to him on that occasion by his father, in the presence of his future parishioners,—that his son had never caused him one moment's pain from his birth till that day.

We have now reached that part of my father's life which is the subject of this book. The readers of these "Reminiscences" will find that they refer to the principles which guided his life at Row rather than to the outward events and incidents which marked its progress. My father's reasons for abstaining from personal details have been partly explained in the opening chapters, especially at the end of Chapter II. In a letter written to me in October, 1871, he says, "I have read over again the introductory part of my MS. I hope it may stand—but condensed. As to the character you would like to be given to this retrospect, your mother agrees with me in the opinion that it is not *in my way*, or what I could do wisely for myself, even as to accuracy of memory."

An additional reason is hinted at in the passage to which I have referred in the words, "Note R. H. S.'s book." This intended note was not written; but I have reason to know that what my father chiefly wished to say was this,—that he considered that Mr. R. H. Story, in his life of his father, had given a faithful and trustworthy account of "the Row Case;" and that it was superfluous for himself to go over the same ground, even if he had had "more strength for such a task than he felt now to remain."

As, however, many readers may not have it in their power to consult Mr. Story's most interesting work, it seems right that this volume should contain some

account, however brief, of the outward circumstances of my father's life and ministry at Row. Happily such an account can be given, for the most part, in his own words. Near the end of this period (on the first day of 1831) he wrote to his brother in India a very long letter, which contains an outline of the history of his teaching since his coming to Row: this letter will be embodied in the present chapter.

Besides this narrative we have his weekly letters to his father,—of which there remain more than a hundred, written while he was at Row. Many of these letters will, it is hoped, be published in due time, together with the rest of my father's correspondence. For the present it will be enough to give such short extracts from them as may either supplement the narrative, or illustrate passages in the "Reminiscences."

The ministry at Row falls naturally into three periods of somewhat unequal duration. The first extends from September, 1825, to December, 1827; the second from the latter date till March, 1830; and the third includes the last year of his ministry, ending with his deposition by the General Assembly in May, 1831. These periods are marked off by two critical points in the narrative:—one the beginning of opposition on the part of the clergy; the other the initiation of formal proceedings in the Church Courts.

The following is the opening passage of the letter to his brother above referred to :—

"In September, 1825, I was placed in the Parish of Row. I cannot say that there was anything then to mark my theological creed. As to Church politics, I was distinguished, to my own mind, among the young ministers my contemporaries, by a deep conviction of the practical evils which had arisen from party feelings, and by a determined purpose to hold personally a perfect neutrality.

"As to pastoral feeling, I was then conscious to a single and strong desire to be the instrument of good to the flock over which I had been appointed overseer; but beyond the purpose of entire devotedness this desire took no distinct form, nor had I any theory or view, peculiar to myself, as to the reason of the want of living religion, to the prevalence of which my eyes now in a measure opened. As to personal religion, I can, in looking back, trace the elements of that which I have since felt certain is vital godliness, and know that the apprehension of a good-will in God towards me, expressed by the gift of Christ, and of the desire of that good-will as being personal godliness, and of my need of strength through the Holy Ghost, in order to accomplish in me that desire on the part of God, were indistinctly but truly in my own mind, mingled with erroneous views of the relative places of seriousness and true holiness, and of the importance of religion as distinct from its intrinsic

excellence; while, as to doctrinal views, the fact of an Atonement, and the necessity of Regeneration, were the only points which had any distinct prominency as realities in my mind. I cannot now say that I had any distinct weighing of the question, whether Christ had died for all, or only for the elect, or any of the other questions on this subject which have since so engrossed my attention.

"As to Election, I was content to hold it simply as a matter of fact, and to excuse myself for not considering it much, by regarding it as a mystery; and I believe that in point of fact I was practically and in real feeling unfettered by it, in declaring to my fellow sinners so much of God's love as I then knew myself.

"Two circumstances in the character of the labours on which I immediately entered, appear to me to have had an important influence in leading to subsequent results. The one was my having been led to form the resolution, and act upon it, of using no assistance in my preparations for the pulpit but the Bible. I never read any sermons on the texts which I selected before beginning to write myself; nor did I consult any Commentary, unless in seeking to ascertain the precise translation of the original. I think I took for granted (because of my ignorance of God, and inexperience in the faithfulness of that word 'He giveth liberally and upbraideth not') that I would, at no distant date, run out of matter, and exhaust my resources; in which case—but in which case alone—I

purposed availing myself in some shape of the labours of others, though not of course in the way of plagiarism. But having been led, whenever I had difficulty of any kind in my preparation for the pulpit, to go to God in prayer, instead of feeling that I had run out of topics or illustrations, I found the preparation for each successive Sabbath occupy less time than that of the previous one: until at last it was a very common thing with me to write out fully two discourses of from 35 to 40 minutes' reading each on the Saturday. The other circumstance was my proceeding, immediately on my induction, to visit my parish with the resolution—which I was also in a great measure enabled to act upon—of giving the character of ministerial visits to all my intercourse with my people, and avoiding the error of making religious discourse the topic only at seasons set apart for the purpose. The practice thus adopted had a powerful influence in increasing in my own mind the feeling that religion was a thing truly of all times and of all seasons; and it contained a demand on my people, which, in the way in which it wrought upon them, soon made it apparent how much it was the fact that though willing—so to speak—to give a *little* of their time to God, that they might with the less disturbance from conscience *enjoy themselves* in the rest of it, they had not yet been taught to 'count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of the love of God in Christ Jesus.'

"These two circumstances—my exclusive study of the Word of God, and my exclusive intercourse as the servant of God with man—increased rapidly my acquaintance with the extent of the demands for personal religion on the part of God, and with the little measure of compliance with these on the part of men, and rendered my meditations chiefly researches into the reasonableness of the former, and the consequent sin in not meeting them, and the various devices of Satan by which men were enabled to live at peace in an evil way; and my discourses contained the exposition of the discoveries on these subjects, which were daily making to me, along with such personal warnings, and practical exhortations to my people as these discoveries suggested."

At this point may be introduced some extracts from letters written to his father during the first year at Row. They reflect something of the brightness of that dawn of which he speaks so often in the Reminiscences. It was a dawn of which the memory remained with him till sun-set.

"SHANDON *(Spring of* 1826*).*

". . . I am just now again proceeding with my visiting, and finding much comfort in it, and in many other occurrences. One case I may shortly mention:—a highly respectable man came to me the other night to say that he was longing to see me, but that I had not yet come to his house (in Helensburgh); but, being passing, he could not but call to tell of how much comfort I was the source to him. This man has lately come to feel

the power of the truth, and the history of his change and its fruit are both alike pleasing. In attempting to teach another, he came to feel his own ignorance, and thus was led to hear the Word and to pray, and he at last came to a clear and soul-composing view of the truth."

It will interest the reader to know, that, only a few weeks before his death, my father visited the house of this old parishioner; it was the last time that he crossed the Gareloch.

"SHANDON COTTAGE,
June 18, 1826.

"I this day gave out the Sacrament for the fourth Sunday in July—the day in this parish for a long time past. I shall have no assistance on the Sunday (ordained I mean) excepting Norman * and Story."

"*22nd June.*

". . . I really have much to do; much to write and much to speak before the Sacrament, preparing young communicants, &c.; you know how laboriously I do these things, and it will prodigiously press me to go to you next week."

"*13th July.*

"I do not intend to give a large dinner on the Monday—as is the usual practice of this country, but a practice that does not at all meet my approbation. I shall have nobody but my assisting brethren.

". . . My not going (to Kilninver) arises from that being the day I meet my young communicants in this end of the parish for the last time. I have, upon the

* His cousin, Norman M'Leod, father of the late Dr. M'Leod of the Barony.

whole, had much comfort in them, though more in the anxiety to know than in their actual knowledge. But by next year I hope to have them better prepared. The number is unusually great—about thirty-five."

"*July.*

"I am again on the Monday obliged to make a very hurried communication of the comfort with which, upon the whole, I may say I have been supported through the duties of my first Sacrament. Though my dearest friend was not with me, M'Leod thought himself entitled to act as his representative; and, in his anxiety to make all comfortable, he took a great deal of duty, as much to his own credit as I hope it was to the edification of my poor people. I had also the presence of Penney, and Story you know is all sympathy and kindness."

The "sympathy and kindness" of his friend Mr. Story, Minister of the neighbouring Parish of Rosneath, formed an important element in my father's life at Row. He proved a faithful friend in dark and trying times, no less than in those brighter days to which these extracts belong.

A few months later we find the following in a letter to his father:—"I have just finished a delightful little volume, 'Shepherd's Private Thoughts,' given me the other day when at Jordanhill by your friend, Mrs. Smith. You should be very grateful, when he is so far from you, that God is providing your boy with so many kind friends, but, above all, that God is granting some of the light of His countenance,—the peace and joy in believing, which is worth more than all the gold of all the Indies."

About the same time he writes:—"I am very happy—have had a most delightful meeting (of heritors)—have got 320 more sittings for my church, and all agreed to a new manse."

One letter of this first year contains what may be called an anticipation of a future friendship and of more distinctive teaching:—

"Row, *Feb.* 25, 1826.

"I have lately been reading a book which I shall take home with me, 'Erskine's Internal Evidences,' which is the only book with that title which deserves the name, as it is really an extracting of evidence from the peculiarities of the scheme itself; and in it a topic on which we once had some conversation is put upon its proper basis,—I mean the connection between the doctrines and the morality of the Gospel. . . . I have daily many proofs that no one will ever have a sufficiently high standard of morality who does not rest his hopes exclusively on the merits of Christ. Such a one sees no limit to duty, and—to use a comparison of your own in your Synod sermon—actually 'shoots at the heavens;' whereas, while there is any trusting to our own merits, there is a constant lowering of the Divine requirements—such a lowering as is necessary in order to our feeling that we have any merit."

It was during the second year of his ministry—that is, between the autumn of 1826 and the autumn of 1827—that his teaching came to have that distinctive and individual character which at first simply

intensified its interest, but which afterwards aroused opposition.

The history of his thinking at this time is most fully explained in the Reminiscences, Part II. It is therefore unnecessary to dwell upon it here; it will be enough to give the continuation of the narrative in a slightly abridged form. It proceeds thus:—

"The first doctrinal and practical subject on which I remember to have felt that much light was given me was *repentance.* I was led to see how much of that little repentance which was to be found, was merely regret for the personal evil consequences of having exposed oneself to the wrath of God. So-called confessions of sin were, in truth, confessions of folly and imprudence.* The superiority of religion to irreligion was acknowledged because of the greater importance of *eternal* as compared with *temporal* interests, not from any perception of the intrinsic excellence and beauty of holiness and love, and the intrinsic deformity and hatefulness of sin and selfishness.

"When this subject was opened up to me, the hollowness and hypocrisy of the profession made of repentance, in men's approaches to God, appeared to me most awful. . . . A similar mockery of God I was at that time made to see in those *verbal* tributes of admiration to God as just, holy, and good, which men offer in their prayers, not because their hearts are full of His excellence and enamoured of His

* In this sentence and the next the exact words of the narrative have not been retained.

beauty, but because they think it will please Him and recommend themselves to Him. At this time I laboured hard to make these distinctions visible to my people, and to give them a true standard by which to measure themselves, and tests by which to detect the deceptions of their own hearts. I did not at that time, however, see any great fruit of these labours, and was often subjected to the pain of hearing persons, whose demeanour indicated that they were not new creatures in Christ Jesus, expressing the strongest approbation of sermons which, it appeared to me, were peculiarly fitted to disturb their false peace. And I found the higher I raised the standard, I only the more stimulated the efforts of a self-righteous and self-deceiving spirit to personate —in the way of acting as in a dramatic exhibition —the character of excellence held forth.

"Meditating with prayer on this painful ministerial experience, I was gradually taught to see that so long as the individual is uncertain of being the subject of love to his God, and is still without any sure hold of his personal safety in the prospect of eternity, it is in vain to attempt to induce him to serve God under the power of any purer motive than the desire to win God's love for himself, and so to secure his own happiness; consequently, however high the standard, correspondence with it may be sought under the influence of mingled selfishness, making every apparent success only a deeper deception. And thus I

was gradually led to entertain the doctrine commonly expressed by the words '*Assurance of Faith*,' having first seen that the want of it precluded singleness of heart and eye in the service of God, and then having found in studying the Epistles to the first Christian Churches, that its existence, in those addressed, was *in them* taken for granted, and in every practical exhortation was presupposed. I accordingly began to urge on my own people, that in order to their being free to serve God—in order to their being in a condition to act purely, under the influence of love to Him, and delight in what He is, their first step in religion would require to be, *resting assured of his love in Christ to them as individuals*, and of their individually having eternal life given to them in Christ.

"I think this was the character of my preaching in the latter part of the year 1826, but I cannot easily fix; and in the summer of 1827 I think it first was that I understood that offence was taken with what I taught. This however, for some time, amounted merely to the complaint that I 'carried the subject of Assurance too far,' and no one ventured to advance the charge of heresy. It was at the same time also that I first enjoyed the happiness of seeing many awakened from their false security, and not a few to delight themselves in the Lord: and what my pressing of high attainments, as the fruits of faith had been *unable* to accomplish, I now found produced by the earnest demand for *the true faith itself*.

"Towards the end of 1827, at the time when my summer parishioners returned home, the report carried up to Glasgow of what they had been hearing at Row produced a considerable sensation there, in what is called the 'religious world.' In consequence of this, a minister of Glasgow selected as the subject of essay in the theological society, 'The Assurance of Faith.' Knowing that many misrepresentations of what I had taught on the subject had reached my brethren, I felt it my duty to attend and hear the essay read; and if the opportunity was given (for I was not a member of the society), to reply or explain, as it might appear right. The essay was exceedingly temperate, but full of what I knew to be false principles. I was asked, and gladly accepted the invitation, to speak; and after they had all spoken, and very courteously, I was again permitted to reply. I went away thankful for the indulgence I had experienced, and full of expectation as to the result of their meditating on what I had been enabled to say.

"The following week I preached a public sermon on a week day for one of the Glasgow charitable institutions; and I remember, in order to preclude the charge of Antinomianism, while, at the same time, as affording the opportunity of setting forth the practical importance of the Assurance of Faith, I selected as my text John xvii., *v.* 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth." Most of the ministers of

Glasgow were present, and from this occasion I date the opposition of my brethren. I had fondly hoped that the explanation given in the clerical society would have removed prejudices, and commended the truth. They, however, had calculated on my being changed by what had come from them, and, in consequence, were much offended to hear me so shortly after state so fully what they had condemned; and for many Sabbaths, most of the ministers in Glasgow were preaching with pointed reference to what I taught. There was as yet, however, no organized opposition in the parish of Row."

Before passing on to the second period—the time of growing opposition—it may be well to give a few short extracts from letters written during 1827.

"*28th January.*

"I have commenced with my young communicants,—a most promising class, between twenty and thirty, and most anxious to receive instruction. . . . A most unusual and comforting circumstance is that half the number are young men."

"*Feb.* 11.

"I am just now very active. I visit parochially two days in the week, and pass a third among the sick (of whom my list is six or seven just now) and sometimes—indeed, in general—a fourth, which leaves two for study: quite enough if unbroken—which, however, they never are. But I am enabled always to be prepared. I am getting on well with my young people: I meet them Sunday after sermon,—about thirty, very promising."

"SHANDON COTTAGE, *April 3rd.*

"I kept my engagement in Glasgow on the Wednesday, and was strengthened to preach at considerable length to a large audience; and I have cause to bless God for the result in removing prejudice from many minds."

"*23rd July.*

"My class, with whom I was at so much pains, have given me much satisfaction. Very few of them have come forward, but this rather gives me pleasure; because, though in the state of their theoretical knowledge I could not and would not have kept them back, I did not think them prepared. They have, however, greatly gained by the class, and are longing for its re-commencement. Of my people in general I can say nothing, but that on the Sabbath their demeanour was unusually solemn and proper."

[*Without date*].

"I had the intermission of a day from preaching last Sabbath, which I did not regret, as my pulpit was occupied by my young friend Mr. Scott.* I heard him with very peculiar delight. His preaching, though his second Sabbath, was with a sober, solemn composure, that would have seemed a delightful attainment in a man of much experience. The progress he has made already in the divine life, the elevation and clearness of his views, the spirit of love which he breathes in every word, and the single-eyed devotedness to his Master's glory, are to me most delightful illustrations of the power of simple faith. Few old ministers are so intimately acquainted with the Bible, or have so examined the import of its words; and this just because the love of Christ constrains him, and makes it his happiness

* Mr. A. J. Scott, afterwards Principal of Owen's College, Manchester.

to study and inquire into all that connects itself with the religion of his Master. Oh glory be unto God for sending such a labourer into the harvest! and Oh that He would send many such!"

"Row, *December 24th.*

"I preached last week in Glasgow. The collection was much more than was anticipated; but this is a small matter. I had a numerous and attentive audience, including most of the Glasgow ministers; and much conversation and, I may trust, serious inquiry has been the result. My text was 'Sanctify them by thy truth.' . . .

"Many of those who are most looked up to as orthodox men think my standard too high; but this by no means surprises me. May God give me grace to be wise and prudent as well as faithful, for many eyes are upon me. I am weak, but Christ has promised, saying, 'Lo! I am with you always,' and that is enough."

To these extracts from his own letters may be added one from a letter written by his father to his sister in India.

"KILNINVER, *19th Dec.*, 1827.

"I heard lately from John. . . . He is so wholly engrossed in his own labours that a visit from him is a great favour. . . . He is most attentive in writing me, and in every letter he gives the skeleton of his discourse the preceding Sunday. . . .

"Your brother is certainly the most uncommon young man I ever was acquainted with. His talents are very good, but little to his zeal and industry in his great work—the salvation of souls. He seldom writes a discourse now,

but his time is constantly occupied in examining his people, visiting the sick, and preaching to his friends in private, with a view to awaken them to their great interest. He is thought rather strict by some people, and he and I do not entirely agree in some points; but would to God that all of us in the same holy office had our hearts so deeply and thoroughly impressed as he is with the truth and power of sacred things."

His own narrative proceeds thus:—

"The controversy in which I was constantly engaged in almost all my intercourse with my brethren urged me to examine narrowly the foundation furnished by the communications made in the Gospel for *Assurance of Faith.* This led directly to the closer consideration of the extent of the Atonement, and the circumstances in which mankind had been placed by the shedding of the blood of Christ; and it soon appeared to me manifest that unless Christ had died *for all*, and unless the Gospel announced Him as *the gift of God to every human being*, so that there remained nothing to be done to give the individual a title to rejoice in Christ as his own Saviour, there was no foundation in the record of God for the Assurance which I demanded, and which I saw to be essential to true holiness. The next step therefore was my teaching, as the subject-matter of the Gospel, Universal Atonement and Pardon through the blood of Christ.

"It may appear strange to any one unacquainted

with these matters, that those who had been most satisfied with my teaching on the subject of Assurance—namely, some sects that urge this subject much—now became opposed to me, and strangely held that, if I regarded the Atonement as universal, I deprived the individual Christian of *all* assurance; while those who objected to the urgency with which I pressed personal assurance, now held that doctrine to have become still more dangerous when connected with that of universal pardon.

"Such opposition made more and more apparent to me the want of true religion in the land. I was made to mourn over many whose strong confidence, along with their outward propriety of conduct, had made me hope well of them, when I saw by their opposition to the universality of the Atonement that their assurance had been very much its own basis,—that their faith had not been the belief of a record of God, true whether believed or not, but had been the assumption of a fact, for which they had no other proof but that they had assumed it; and that instead of resting in the character of God as revealed in Christ, they looked upon the death of Christ as so much suffering—the purchase-money of heaven to a certain number, to whom it infallibly secured heaven. And I was made to mourn over the opposition to the doctrine of *universal pardon* taking, as it did, such forms as, 'If all are forgiven, then we need not repent, or be sorry for our sins, or think of a future judgment, and we

may do what we please:' for it was thus apparent beyond all my previous fears that what men called repentance was not a real sorrow for sin, but merely something offered in exchange for safety; and I was shocked to hear men avow that if they were certain their Heavenly Father forgave them their sin they would feel it unnecessary to grieve because they had offended Him; and, instead of being led to repentance by the knowledge of this His goodness, would be encouraged by it to sin more and more. It was, however, rather as what others would be likely to say, than as what they would say themselves, that men uttered such things; but it was manifest that, though speaking in the *third* person, they spoke of *themselves*. While I was labouring to remove objections, the bringing of which made such painful discoveries, it became more and more apparent to me that men objected because they wished to object; that they hated the light, and only sought to excuse themselves to themselves,—I mean, to find apologies of a specious kind for rejecting a doctrine which they felt too searching; and I was struck to find thus illustrated our Saviour's declaration that while it was for righteousness' sake that His followers would be hated, the form in which that hatred would manifest itself would be speaking evil of them falsely. No man will admit a thing to be *holy*, and at the same time object to it. He must first call it, and find some excuse for calling it, *unholy*, and then he can condemn it (see

Isaiah lxvi. 5; John xvi. 2); and thus, while rejoicing in being taught of God the secret of the prevailing ungodliness,—that it was the simple unbelief of God's manifested character in Christ,—and while urging the faith of forgiving love as that which purifieth, I found myself charged with Antinomianism, and with setting forth doctrines leading to licentiousness; and, as if to stamp the character of the opposition awakened, it first took an active form, in the parish, in the persons of some individuals of much practical ungodliness."

This passage explains very distinctly the transition from the earlier to the later form of his teaching at Row. During 1827 the *nature* of faith had been the most prominent subject; during the two following years he dwelt rather on the *object* of faith,—namely, Christ's death for all men, forgiveness in Christ for all men. In other words, he first taught that that only can be truly called faith which produces the fruit of peace with God; and he went on to teach that the assured faith, which of necessity produces this fruit, must have as its object that which is true whether it be believed or not. Many said, "Believe in the forgiveness of your sins, *and they will be* forgiven:" he said, "Believe in the forgiveness of your sins *because they are* forgiven." Many said, "Believe that Christ died for you, and your faith will be an evidence to yourself that you are one of those for whom Christ died:" he said, "Believe that Christ died for you because He died for all mankind."

The letters of this period furnish many indications of the course of his thought and teaching.

In April, 1828, he writes:—"I am daily more impressed with the awful state of our Church. The prophets speak words of false peace, and the people wish to have it so. . . . I am in truth of opinion that the Protestantism of our day is as much in need of reformation as the Catholicism of the days of Luther."

It was in the summer of this year that my father became acquainted with Edward Irving. Mrs. Oliphant quotes a letter dated June 10th, in which Irving speaks of preaching at Row on the preceding Sunday: "I was much delighted," he says, "with Campbell and Sandy Scott, whom I have invited to come to London." On the same day my father writes: "I have the prospect of preaching the glad tidings of free pardon in London. . . . Mr. Irving has been with me and is away. I have had much pleasure in his short visit. His peculiar views are new to me, as to others, and too important to be suddenly taken up, but I feel much cause of thankfulness to be given me in the possession of his most Christian friendship. . . . Tell —— of my going to London, and that I am to preach in Irving's pulpit." In a letter written some years later I find the following:—"I remember when first we met our parting was in Glasgow; and after we had prayed together, in separating he said to me, 'Dear Campbell, may your bosom be a pillow for me

to rest upon, and my arm a staff for you to lean upon.'"

The visit to London was accomplished; and Irving wrote that his Kirk-Session "were loud in their acknowledgments to Mr Campbell."

In August we find him hard at work in his parish:—"I preached in a glen which has about a hundred inhabitants, among whom I knew only of one who had received the Gospel. . . . . They had bestowed a day from their work upon the call to meet me. Accordingly I spoke at very great length, and in the most familiar way, mingling as much affection as I possibly could with the greatest faithfulness in telling them what I thought of them. The appearance of impression was considerable, and when I came out there was not a head of a family present that did not press to shake hands with me. . . . I propose preaching every Thursday in some corner of the parish while the season is favourable."

Passing on to 1829 we find the following:—

"*14th January.*

"I have no wish whatever to leave the Church of Scotland:—not for the sake of the *living* which is now coming to me as a member of it;—if I saw it God's will that I should leave it I could have no hesitation in going out, trusting all to Him;—but because I honestly feel that there is no body calling itself Christian to which I could join myself in preference."

To his sister.

"Row, *22nd Feby.*, 1829.

"My mind is at present somewhat burdened about the petition to the Presbytery, but as, through grace, I am conscious of the single and unmingled desire to act as may be most for the glory of the truth, I can cast my burden on the Lord."

This petition was signed by three or four individuals, only two of whom appeared before the Presbytery. "Of these the name of one was struck off the petition, as it appeared that he had for many years been refused Church privileges, and consequently could not be considered a member of the Church." I quote these words from a book entitled "The Whole Proceedings in the case of the Rev. J. M'Leod Campbell," published at Greenock in 1831.

To his sister.

"Glasgow, *27th March*, 1829.

"He who has the hearts of all men in His hands, has put it into the mind of some of my parishioners without having any communication with me, to send in a counter-petition. This is signed by all the most respectable people in the parish, including Lord John Campbell and the two Buchanans. It ought certainly to make it easier for my brethren to come to the resolution of rejecting; and at all events is such a tribute, I understand, to my personal character as will be a practical testimony to the truth."*

* The adverse petition was withdrawn.

In May he preached a course of sermons on the nature of faith, and of good works: the former he explained as "nothing more or less than the belief of what God says to us;" the latter as "nothing more or less than the effect of knowing the truth of what God says to us."

In August he writes,—"I am just setting out for the Parish of Old Kilpatrick, where I am to place the new minister, Dr. Fleming, to-morrow. I look forward with much interest, but without anxiety to this opportunity of preaching the Gospel in the hearing of my co-presbyters. At present opposition seems very much subsided, but very few are receiving 'with cordial faith the tidings which we bring.'"

Opposition had subsided, but only for a short time.

In November he writes,—"I was at Glasgow a fortnight ago, attending a meeting of our clerical society, and had the pain of hearing an essay against the Gospel, from Dr. H., which all received with plaudits but myself."

From this point onwards the letters contain indications of a conflict which was daily becoming more intense.

In January, 1830, he writes to his sister in India—"What Scotland is full of, you must hear even on the banks of the Ganges. Many of the strangers here in summer went away rejoicing in the Lord. They are spreading the good news in their several homes, and this has produced the natural reaction: the pulpits of Edinburgh now as well as Glasgow

are spoken from with much keenness against what they call the Row Heresy. Dr. Thomson has preached a series of sermons on the subject which are now in the press. . . . Some who agree with me as to the great truth have had some difficulty in adopting my language. This has made me consider and re-consider it, but I have seen no reason to alter it. If the objections so violently urged had turned upon words it would have been more difficult to adhere; but in every case they have turned upon principles clearly and decidedly fundamental."

The next extract (which will be the last referring to this period) is from a letter to his father, dated Row Manse, 14th February, 1830:—"A short-hand writer has for some time past been taking notes of my sermons, and the first thing that is to be done in the way of disabusing people's minds as to the truth, is the publication of a volume* of these notes, selected with the object of shewing the erroneousness of the impression, that repentance and personal holiness are not inculcated, and that the character of God as righteousness as well as love is forgotten. Notes of sermons preached before these publications (*i.e.*, Dr. Andrew Thomson's book and others) will shew that these charges were brought in ignorance of what was supposed so dangerous."

* This volume of Sermons passed through three editions, and both it and a second volume subsequently published have been long out of print.

It will be impossible to give, within the limits of the present narrative, a detailed account of the ecclesiastical proceedings in the Row Case: nothing more than an outline will be here attempted.

For the earlier stages of these proceedings—as far as the end of 1830—we have the closing passage of the long letter to his brother, which is as follows:—

"The individuals in question,* joined by a few who had the reputation of orthodoxy,—and who had therefore some status to lose if these views were adopted,—made several successive attempts to make my preaching the subject of Presbyterial enquiry. By one circumstance or another two several petitions were made to fall to the ground. At length in March last a petition signed by twelve parishioners was received by the Presbytery and became subsequently the foundation of a Presbyterial visitation and ultimately of the libel which I sent you. This complaint gave occasion to a representation signed by almost all the heads of families in the parish expressive of their strong desire that I should not be disturbed in my labours among them, as they were quite satisfied with the way in which I discharged my duties. It also gave occasion to that painful expression of feeling on the part of my brethren in the General Assembly of last year which I think I detailed in a letter to Jean Mary, and to similar things in the Presbytery since; and the Presbytery are now acting under an authority

* See the close of the preceding extract from this letter, p. 27.

given by the Assembly, and beyond what they constitutionally have, and which, being justified on the ground on which a suspension of the Habeas Corpus is justified, affords the strongest expression of the alarm which the cry of 'heresy' has awakened.

"The first thing to be disposed of in any such trial is the *relevancy of the libel.* My answers contain all that I urged on that point. You will be struck when I tell you that they were absolutely and exclusively my own, unaided by any legal friend; that they were dictated in the course of two days and nights, one clerk supplying the place of another when exhausted; that they went first to the Presbytery and afterwards to the press in the original scroll, there having been no time for copying. This I mention that you may know how the Lord hath helped me in this His own cause.

"Notwithstanding my answers the Presbytery found the libel relevant. I protested, and so the relevancy will come to be discussed in the next General Assembly, and this is *the question.* This protest does not however 'sist' proceedings, as it would have done but for the act of last Assembly to which I have referred; and they are about to lead proof of the statements ascribed to me in the libel. At first they seemed satisfied with my own confessions, as well they might for I confessed all; but finding that my answers which I circulated among my brethren (though not at liberty to *publish* them,—at least,

restrained by delicacy) were producing a favourable impression on many, they are now going to try and prove something more offensive than what I have admitted. I trust to be able to disappoint this wish,—for such I grieve to say it is,—and to make the truth of my honesty and candour manifest.* This step in the process is fixed for the 16th of February. Supposing them to fail in attempting to give the case any new feature, the Assembly will have to judge me altogether on the answers in your possession. These being sent to all the Ministers of the Church by this time, there is ample time for deliberation, and He who alone can, may bless my statement so widely as to give a new turn to things, and make the coming a contrast to the last Assembly; but it is only in the event of a great revolution in the mind of the Ministers that I can expect being permitted to remain in the Church a day subsequent to the next Assembly."

The following account of the proceedings, subsequent to the date of this letter, has been abridged by Mr. Story from one of the chapters of his life of his father :—

The Presbytery having decided that the libel was relevant, *i.e.*, that its charges, if proved, were valid and

* The hope here expressed was amply realised; and he often recalled with satisfaction the fact that the Presbytery had recourse to his own statements, and not to the evidence of witnesses, for the strongest expression of the obnoxious doctrines.

would infer ecclesiastical penalty, proceeded to hear the proof. Several days were occupied in the examination of the witnesses, and at the close the Presbytery by a majority found the libel "proven," and farther "Find that the defender has entertained and promulgated the doctrine of universal atonement and pardon through the death of Christ, and also the doctrine that assurance is of the essence of faith and necessary to salvation." The case was appealed to the Synod, where it was in vain pointed out, on behalf of Mr. Campbell, that in the sense in which he understood and used these terms, they could not be proved to embrace doctrines contrary to Scripture or to the Confession. His opponents had affixed a meaning of their own to them, and would recognise no other.

The tone of the Synod was unfriendly, and there was not even the appearance of patient dispassionate attention to the claims of the accused. Only one voice was raised on his behalf—that of the Rev. John Wylie, minister of Carluke, "Dear Mr. Carlyle" (his counsel), says Mr. Campbell in a letter to his father, "spoke for three hours and ten minutes, and gave a far better and fuller analysis of the proof than at Dumbarton; but they went almost all out while Mr. Story and he spoke, and only returned towards the close of the speaking from the bar." Mr. Campbell's appeal, which he supported personally in a comprehensive speech, was not entertained, but the whole

case was referred, without any formal decision on the Synod's part, to the General Assembly.

To the Assembly he looked forward with little hope. On the day after his return from the Synod he writes to his father: "I never came to Row Manse with so heavy a heart as last night, and unless by such a miracle as the stopping of the sun I can expect nothing but the most awful things from the Assembly. . . . I shall write again before I go 'home.' That word will soon return to its old exclusive meaning. Oh, my father! I am afraid my letter has had too sad a tone. My afflictions do indeed abound, but I can assure you that through the grace of God my consolations do more abound."

The proceedings in the Assembly began on Tuesday, 24th May. It was long after midnight before the preliminary points were cleared away, and the merits of the case reached. These, however, can hardly be said to have received any judicial consideration, for though the evidence, on which they rested, extended to nearly 500 pages of print, the decision of the Assembly was pronounced before the house adjourned. Dr. Cook, the leader of the "Moderate" party moved, as soon as the pleadings at the bar were over, that Mr. Campbell should be deposed. The Rev. Lewis Rose proposed the milder sentence of a temporary suspension from his office.

Dr. Campbell, his father, then spoke:—"I have in my hands," said he, "a letter from a most respectable

individual in the parish of Row, well known to many in this house, accompanying a petition from many of the parishioners on behalf of their minister. The petition is signed by 420 individuals, 150 of whom are heads of families, composing (if you except Dissenters) nineteen-twentieths of the whole population. It was stated from the bar that Mr. Campbell's parish was against him. I have read these papers that the house may see this to be untrue. Moderator, I am the oldest father at present in this house. I have been forty years a minister in the Church. It is gratifying to my feelings to state what I have now done, and it ought to be gratifying to yours—for you should be glad to hear that any one of your brethren has been useful in his parish, and is beloved by his people.

"A great deal was said from the other side of the house about dealing leniently with Mr. Campbell. Now I would just ask where is the leniency if you go into the motion on the table and cut him off, *brevi manu*, from the Church? You have not done Mr. Campbell justice in attending to what has been this day laid before you. You have heard him this day in his own defence, and he has told you that he just teaches that 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;' and with regard to universal pardon, he has told you that he just means by it that sinners may come to God through Jesus Christ as to a reconciled Father. Now

I am sure there is none among us all who has anything to say against this. And with regard to Assurance, what he says is no more than this—that a sceptic is no Christian,—that doubting God is not believing Him. And he has told you that he abhors what are called the Antinomian doctrines of the 'Marrow;' and I can say that I never heard any preacher more earnestly and powerfully recommending holiness of heart and life. It was certainly what I never expected, that a motion for his immediate deposition should have come from my old friend Dr. Cook; but I do not stand here to deprecate your wrath. I bow to any decision to which you may think it right to come. Moderator, I am not afraid for my son; though his brethren cast him out, the Master whom he serves will not forsake him; and while I live, I will never be ashamed to be the father of so holy and blameless a son."

These simple and affecting words of remonstrance uttered, the sentence of deposition was carried by 119 to 6.

It was, in May, 1871, just forty years after his deposition by the General Assembly, that my father began to write the "Reminiscences and Reflections" which are contained in this volume. This long interval must now be passed over very briefly, for it has no direct bearing on the subject of this book. It will be enough to state a few facts which may connect the

past, which is recalled in these reminiscences, with those months of repose and meditation during which they were written.

The General Assembly could exclude him from the pulpits of the Church, but they could not hinder him from continuing to proclaim to his countrymen the Gospel of Forgiveness. It was in a field on the outskirts of Helensburgh, on the 15th of August, that he preached his farewell sermon to the people of Row. "My dear hearers," he said, "and beloved people, I desire now to be enabled of God, under the blue sky which He has spread over us, to speak to you in faithfulness and in love." On another occasion, when saying farewell to a smaller gathering of his people, he bespoke a kindly welcome for his successor:— "When I remember how much the kind welcome I experienced among the people when I came first among them drew me to them, and made me wish to be taught myself that I might teach them, I feel that it is not only for his sake but for your own that I call on you to receive in all prayerfulness the man who comes."

Both in the Highlands and the Lowlands of Scotland great numbers came to hear him as he went about preaching the Gospel. About the beginning of 1833 he thought it his duty to devote his energies mainly to the work of ministering to a fixed congregation in Glasgow, although he still preached elsewhere on week-days. To this congregation he con-

tinued to minister—with occasional interruptions on account of his health—until in the spring of 1859 failing strength obliged him to retire. He had no desire, however, to form a sect; and it was in every way according to his wishes that many of those who had belonged to his congregation joined, on his retirement, the congregation of the Barony Church, where they were cordially received by Dr. Macleod.

In 1838, when first laid aside by bad health, he spent some months in Paris with his friend Mr. Erskine. Dr. Chalmers also was in Paris at this time, and the three friends were much together. My father retained many bright recollections of this intercourse with Chalmers.

His marriage took place in September of this year.

Early in 1843 occurred the death of his father. In a letter written so late as May, 1871, I find these words:—"For no mere creature-gift of the 'better Father' have I been so indebted and so grateful to Him as for the earthly father, whose being what he was filled that name with so much meaning for me."

About three years after his father's death he travelled with his brother in Italy and Germany, and his home-letters written at this time record his keen enjoyment of such pictures as Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, which he used to study by himself for many hours in the early morning.

In 1851 he published a small volume on the subject of the Eucharist, entitled, "Christ the Bread of Life,"

and five years later appeared his best-known book, the "Nature of the Atonement." In preparation for writing on this subject, he was at pains to make himself acquainted with the teaching of Luther, as well as with the earlier and later Calvinists. He entered upon this study about the beginning of 1854, and his book was completed before the autumn of the following year.

From time to time my father visited England. When in London he enjoyed the friendship of Professor Maurice, whom he accompanied, on one occasion, to his lecture-room at King's College; and although they met only at long intervals, the warmth of their regard for one another remained the same to the last. It was during one of these visits to London—in the summer of 1852—that he had some intercourse with two men remarkable in different ways, Baron Bunsen and Archbishop Manning. Some traces of his intercourse with the latter will be found in the Reminiscences, where he speaks of having been "pressed by an advocate of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, as to the relation of faith in the Scriptures to faith in the Church."

During the later years of his life my father took an increasing interest in the theological questions which were agitating the Church of England; and in a series of letters to myself, extending over more than eleven years, are recorded many of his thoughts with reference to such questions.

In 1862 he published "Thoughts on Revelation," in which he discussed such subjects as Inspiration and the Supernatural,—subjects which were at that time engaging much attention in connection with the controversies which followed the publication of "Essays and Reviews."

Before the close of this period a very considerable change had taken place in the religious mind of Scotland, with reference to such teaching as that for which he had been condemned. Two tokens of this change may be mentioned. In 1868 the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred on him by the University of Glasgow; and when, two years later, he removed his home to Rosneath a number of representative men, both lay and clerical, combined to do him honour.

It was when this change of residence was fixed upon (in 1869) that he wrote as follows to Mrs. Story, the widow of his old friend:—"I am now looking forward to, I trust, a quiet evening of my day where I passed its troubled noon—the shore of the Gareloch! So I speak: yet I may never know more perfect quiet in the highest sense than was granted to me in that troubled noon-tide,—the light of the Eternal Day shining brightest inwardly when the sky of my outward life was most overclouded. . . . This morning it came into my mind,—lying awake, thinking of past, present and future,—that I should write to you on this occasion, to you who are *there*

the one chief living link with the past, and attraction of the present plan. It is impossible not to pass from the memories of my former Gareloch life (now naturally crowding about my spirit) and of the much loved friend who was an element in that life, to the thought of the welcome with which, were he still with us, he would receive me back again,—the intense brightening of that ever-bright welcome which so abides with me, and will abide; for there was in it a ray of the Eternal Light as well as that warm sunshine of a loving heart naturally formed for friendship."

In the spring of 1870 occurred the death of that friend of whom he used to speak as "my beloved Mr. Erskine." He then wrote as follows to Mr. Duncan of Parkhill, Forfarshire:—"As one of the two my friendship with whom had its first commencement forty-three years ago, in the joy of seeing eye to eye in that light of the love of God to man which each of us had known before we met in it, and as with that other (our dear Scott) my original fellow-helper in the Gospel, my bond with him was very special, and, since one of us three was taken, exclusive. You, I know, will give me your sympathy, while you have mine, in that sense of loss which I know will deepen by and by."

Soon after this letter was written the intended move to Rosneath was accomplished. On his seventieth birth-day he wrote to his sister, Mrs. Macnabb:—

"Achnashie, Rosneath.—Since I came down here I have been so well and so able to meet many little demands on me in connection with our flitting and settling here, that my own feeling has seconded the thought that seventy is not so great an age as it used to look to me. But these are surface thoughts either way. 'We are dead and our lives are hid with Christ in God.' This, which so soon after my former coming here I was taught to know and believe, I thank my God I have, in these forty-five years, been learning to feel. . . . . This place is beautiful beyond my picturing of it."

Here, then, at Achnashie, the *field of peace*, he spent the evening of his life, in a repose which was not idleness. In May, 1871, he began a work which he was not to be permitted to finish—that of recalling the beginnings of his life-long ministry, and reviewing the past in the light of the present. The fruits of this interrupted labour form the contents of the present volume.

On Tuesday the 20th of February he was engaged in writing that passage which forms the conclusion of this book. Before the dawn of the following Tuesday he had rested from his labours. During his short illness he suffered much, and, especially towards the close, he was to a great extent unconscious. When first taken ill, early on the morning of Wednesday the 21st February, he said there was something in the pain that he had never felt before; but he added,

"God will give me strength to bear what he sees good for me; and then, what a rest to know that I am in my Father's hand! He knoweth my frame." He soon after quoted the words (so often referred to in the Reminiscences), "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever." "I never saw," he said, "so much meaning in these words before." On one of the later days of the week, my mother asked him whether he was able to think of his absent sons. "All my thoughts," he answered, "are on God and on Christ."

At his death-bed were present his wife, his daughters and his eldest son, and to their comfort Mr. Duncan, his faithful friend for forty years.

The services at Rosneath Church, on the day of the funeral, were conducted by Dr. Macleod and Mr. Story, the sons of the two friends who had assisted him on his first Communion Sunday, in 1826. With them there stood at his grave his old friend Dr. Wylie who had spoken on his behalf in the Synod and the General Assembly. Funeral Sermons were preached by Dr. Macleod and Mr. Story:—the former, alas! too soon to follow his "oldest and dearest friend." From Mr. Story's Sermon I quote these closing words:—

"And now he rests, in a spot dear to his own heart, and closely linked with his memory. You can from his grave see, a mile away, the hills of his old parish. A few steps from him, lie the ashes of the

friend who shared all his counsels and stood by him in his trials, long ago. Within the now broken walls, which cast their shadow on his resting-place, he often preached the Word of Life to that friend's congregation, the fathers and kindred of many here.

"May he rest in peace until the Resurrection of the just, and may we have grace to be followers, even afar off, of such as he!"

PART I.

STARTING-POINTS OF THE MINISTRY AT ROW.

I.

REASONS FOR ATTEMPTING THIS RETROSPECT.

ACHNASHIE, *May* 1871.

I AM now to attempt a retrospect of my early teaching during my brief ministry in the Church of Scotland—at least of so much of my teaching as was called in question by the Church, and was the ground on which my deposition proceeded.

I engage in this attempt with a purpose purely practical.

An interval of forty years separates the present from the past which I wish to recall, and as to which I wish to state what it was both in form and in essence, and how in the retrospect I now regard it.

What I now attempt for a wider circle I have often done partially, in a fragmentary way, in responding from time to time to the interest of individuals. I have also from time to time done it for the satisfaction of my own mind.

For these forty years have brought in their course many calls to such meditation on that past, to which

belonged my first free and earnest thinking; while my isolated position has also made it easier for me to go forward in the path on which I had thus entered. The solemn result of my first step demanded much reconsideration, and in itself the time has been increasingly one of a revising of all beliefs and all past conclusions of thought, a time in which many most assured faiths have been relegated to the region of open question—nay, latterly a time in which to begin with doubt has been assumed to be the most sacred duty.

This assumption may indeed be so interpreted as to be only the saying in other words what the Apostle enjoins when he bids us "prove all things;" while it may also be,—and in many cases seems to be,—the assertion of an obligation to question those fixed starting-points of thought, without which thought is impossible. But, apart from this extreme, the liberty to think, nay the obligation to think, has been continually more and more asserted during these forty years; and this in many has been only the awaking to our abiding calling to be children of the light, together with a proper estimate of our relation to the past, as the "heirs of all the ages." Not to ignore our advantages, but to make the wise use of them,—not to abstain from thinking (at least beyond the thinking implied in the choice of some authority to which we shall blindly submit), but to think thoroughly under the awe of truth proper to those who inquire what

is, not speculate about what should be—this I believe to be our proper part. And the obligation which I have recognised I have endeavoured to meet. This as to many new questions continually arising, but also as to those questions my own early solution of which had so affected my life—I was going to say, had cost me so much, but the gain had infinitely outweighed the loss.

For what questions of religious or philosophical or of political interest could be agitated, that did not take the mind back to the questions, "How are we to conceive of the mind of God in relation to man?" and, "What is that attitude of the mind of man towards God, to which the knowledge of the mind of God towards us calls us?"

Our thoughts in relation to these two questions lie at the root of all our thinking, and, according as they are true or false, must affect it all for good or for evil. But these questions on their part address us as individuals; and the first and primary interest of the Gospel is in the personal answer to them which it gives.

Certainly it was in their individual relation to myself, and to the people committed to my charge, that I felt their pressure in that past which I would now recall.

The opening question of the Shorter Catechism (which is the Church of Scotland's first teaching to her children), viz., "What is the chief end of man?" was to me the practical personal question, "What is the

Divine Will as to myself individually, and as to these my flock?" and the answer, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever," I recognised as the statement of the true interest of existence, determining at once the proper aim of my life as a whole, and of my life as a minister.

In the light of this conception of life I realised the inestimable value of the Scriptures as the gift of God to teach us how we may glorify and enjoy Him; teaching (with this end) "what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man."

The practical result was, on the one hand, an habitual seeing of myself and my people in relation to what God willed us to be, and, on the other hand, a constant study of the Scriptures for the light which this made needful.

As to the claim for the Scriptures, contained in the expression, "*the only rule*," I do not remember that I was detained to consider it. I accepted them as a divine revelation, and as the highest yet granted to man, and which could not contradict, while they would make clearer all other utterances of the mind of God, in nature, in providence, in conscience.

Nor do I remember that I waited to consider how that first question and its answer were intended to be regarded,—whether as stating something known apart from Revelation, and as the light in which we must naturally desire a revelation and welcome it; or as a part of what we first learn from Revelation itself. I

suppose the former conception was implicitly if not explicitly present in my reception of that first question and answer; and if so, the word "*only*" could have to me but a qualified and relative sense—the sense of *adequate* and *perfect*.

At all events, I knew and saw the conception of the chief end of man being to glorify God and enjoy Him to be what commended itself by its own internal light when once before the mind,—a light which I took with me to the study of the Scriptures, that preparation for understanding them which there was in some true conception of the end for which they were given,—yet a light consistent with the consciousness of a need of more light, which made Revelation welcome, not superfluous.

Here, then, was the recognition of Reason and Revelation; but a recognition which brought with it no practical embarrassment; for Reason and Revelation were to me as two witnesses to one Truth, necessarily in harmonious concord, because of their one origin, even God, and therefore what must be felt to be so in so far as they were both understood.

Accordingly I seemed to myself to find that as the purpose of God for man became clearer to me the teaching of the Scriptures became more intelligible; and, as the Scriptures were better understood, that Divine purpose became clearer. This was to be expected; but I notice it and attach value to it as an experience, because what were to me two

concurring witnesses are to so many rather two masters, between whose claims to obedience they have to choose—either subjecting Reason to Revelation, or taking Revelation to the test of Reason. Thus two schools are formed, one claiming to be scriptural, the other to be philosophical; each seeming to itself to move in an open free path, ignoring as of no account the difficulties which the other school encounters: the student of Scripture recognising Divine authority only in the teaching of Scripture, and holding it pride of Reason to pause when any teaching of Scripture seems opposed to Reason; the philosophical school thinking with an independence of Revelation which could only be reasonable if the claim of the Scriptures to be a Divine Revelation had been altogether disproved.

A delusive sense of freedom and of easy progress is the result in both cases: a felt necessity for the discernment of the harmony that subsists between Reason and Revelation is unquestionably a powerful drag on the wheel of the mind's progress, often demanding even long pauses. But I have never found it an ultimate loss to have submitted to this restraint; for in time, on the one hand as the mind has entered more and more into the Divine counsel, and on the other hand as the true teaching of Scripture has been reached, harmony has revealed itself where there had been seeming contrariety; and a pure and salutary light has at last been attained, the path to which

would have been shut up long before if what has proved to be but a show of Reason had been bowed to as conclusive, or what has come to be seen as an erroneous traditional interpretation of Scripture had been accepted as the word of God. For a mere show of Reason is as often misleading to the thinker who rashly mistakes free thought for thorough thinking, as a mere traditional understanding of the Scriptures is to men who set themselves to bow to the authority of Revelation without realising the many sources of error as to what the Scriptures really teach; Protestants quoting texts in the sense the Church—or their section of the Church—has given to them, as confidently as Roman Catholics though with a less consistent confidence.

These are here the dangers on either side:—(1) accepting conclusions of Reason, not reached in the pure light of Reason, but adopted in the rash confidence and superficial thinking in which, under the assertion of a right to think for ourselves, self-confidence is thinly veiled; and (2) accepting the authority of texts of Scripture without the exercise of that caution as to what is the real teaching of those texts which the ever accumulating mass of human comment so imperiously demands, and which the Babel of conflicting interpretations renders so difficult. (3) There is, indeed, a third danger to which we may be exposed by much realisation of the other two; for we may so realise them both as to be tempted to seek

refuge under the shadow of an infallible church, as of a great rock in a weary land.

And this third danger appears to be increasing daily as the confusions of lawless thinkers on the one hand, and the confusions of conflicting interpretations on the other wax more and more oppressive and perplexing to earnest minds.

But the faith of a purpose of God that we should glorify and enjoy Him, and of a Divine Revelation to teach what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man, *this* faith is the door of hope to us in our earnest craving for light, which to see and which to welcome may be our gain from all the distressing operation of our questioning time.

But that past which I seek to recall did not start from any matured conclusion such as this. I proceeded on the reality of the alleged purpose of God for man, and on the justness of the claim made for Revelation in connection with that purpose; and if, in any important measure, I escaped the dangers now noticed, it was not at all because I saw these several wrong paths and avoided them. I took the path which seemed open before me, as steering the right course will save the mariner from hidden rocks on either side, though he knows not of their existence, neither has any chart on which they are marked; while they may be afterwards painfully revealed to him by the wrecks of ships which, coming after him, have deviated to the right or the left. And such a

mariner's thankfulness is mine in this retrospect; for my faith as to the chief end of man, and the relation of Revelation to that end,—my faith in the harmony of Reason and Revelation,—did not spring from any discernment of the results of doubt here.

I then began my ministry, having no doubt as to the will of God that my people should glorify and enjoy Him, and no doubt as to the inestimable value of the Scriptures, in their relation to this divine end, and ordered in the providence of God in subservience to it; while I received the Bible as from the hand of God,—a divine gift suited both to my need as a minister, and to my need as a man.

A younger generation of earnest men may feel as if I ought to have paused as I did not;—at least that they have previous questions to answer as to both the points that were so clear to me,—questions physical and metaphysical to be settled before we can say to ourselves that we know anything of God with certainty—know that He is, or, if He is, whether indeed He has intended that we should know and enjoy Him; questions, again, of criticism—historical, philological, psychological—to be settled before we can receive the Bible as teaching what it is said to teach with reference to the great end of our being, even assuming that end to be knowable and to be known.

I do not feel the less tenderness for all earnest, truthful dealing with these questions by those to

whom they present themselves here as previous questions, that they were not such to myself. May they think honestly — that is, under the awe of truth. May they think freely—that is, giving place to no biassing influence; free to hear all true voices, free to welcome all true light.

I could not, in one sense, place myself in their standpoint, because that would be to me, as to much of the thinking in question, to seek solutions of the known in the unknown. But I have attempted to conceive what their standpoint is, and to see what elements of right reason are left out of account in proposing to occupy it. Without judging another, or venturing to assume that his doubt is cherished in actual resistance to that light which sustains our faith, we must still feel that that light to which we are trusting is uncertain,—that it is not really light, if questions which are insoluble may yet be reasonably urged as previous questions.

II.

THE VALUE OF THE MEMORY OF THE PAST TO OLD AGE

I.

The memory of the past is always an important element in the present. It is increasingly so as life advances, until late in life it is not an uncommon experience to live more in the past than in the present. The value of that possession of the past which memory continues to us, is indeed real and manifold. But our wealth in this kind is, like mere material riches, too often idly wasted, or worse.

But it need not be so: the memory of many years is in itself very precious,—rightly used yielding pleasure and profit—the purest and most healthful pleasure—the highest good.

This is, of course, not understood when decay of power for working in the present, and the growing necessity to be contented to stand aside and look on are complained of.

This high estimate of the value of past life as

providing old age with interest, has no reference to the differences between one man's life and another man's life. It is justified, and justified only in that light in which life has to us its right interest, and memories—as all else—are valued according as they are fitted to do us good,—good in that sense in which it is true that all things work together for good to them that love God.

Once having our hearts directed to the love of God, we see our past as well as our present in the light of our relation to Him; and then even a past which has been darkness in respect of the light of life is recalled as what, though wasted, is still redeemable. We are, in some sense, as the spendthrift to whom the pain of coming to see that he has wasted an inheritance comes accompanied by the discovery of a way in which he may still redeem it.

Something like this is the double effect of the love of God falling on the memory of even the most godless life;—the same light in truth in which the most godly life must be reviewed if the present possession of it through memory is to be a healthy happiness or profit.

The redeemableness of the past—that however wasted, it may yet, in being recalled in the light of the love of God, yield the highest good—is an element in the joy of him who, late in life, finds the pearl of great price. The gratitude which God's goodness had failed to awaken day by day, as it was flowing out on

him, the memory of it now quickens in him. The wisdom which God's chastenings had failed to teach, when he had been visited with them, they now teach, being recalled while he is learning to "strike each error with his Maker's rod, and by self-knowledge penetrate to God." *

But the life in which there has been the earliest and the most unbroken responding to the drawings of the Divine love, and in which every measure of rebuke and correction has been most readily understood and recognised as another form of love, must still be recalled with a sense of shortcoming in either aspect, which is accepted as a call now to deeper thankfulness, to renewed self-abasement.

2.

. . . . Too often the memory of the past is to the old only the material of dreamy thought, as idle and profitless as the day-dreams of youth. But past experience is more substantial than the visions with which hope fills the fancy-future.

According as advancing age more and more unfits us for active life in the present, are we called to a meditative life in the past,—a life rich in the true and proper interest of all life, a life which can go far to redeem the failure of the past life of action. No doubt in one view these failures are usually irre-

* Gambold.

mediable: practical errors of youth or manhood continue to bear their proper fruit even after we have come to see them to be errors—"Had I at such or such a crisis determined differently life might have been so different:"—But this light has come too late. We in this sense find no place for repentance though we seek it carefully with tears.

But in another, and that the highest view, there is nothing irremediable. The most important aspect of all events, in so far as they are acts of ours, is their aspect as seen in the light of righteousness,—the light of God,—the light of the kingdom of God which is in us. And the past, recalled in that light and judged in that light, will yield to us a present and abiding gain which makes the memory of it a part of our mental riches.

3.

This meditative life attracts us, not only as filling a void, but as continuing in a new form the element in the life of action which was its highest value, viz., the development of our eternal life.

We speak sadly of the irrevocable past. The past is doubtless out of our reach as to its time-aspect, but memory continues to us a possession of it of inestimable value—a possession in the right use of which we extract good from the past beyond all it can have yielded to us in passing; even though in passing it

has yielded the same good in measure,—as it must have done in so far as ours has been a well-spent life. Even in such a case, life retraced adds unspeakably to our highest gain from it as it passed, all its lessons now heard in a stillness and a light in which they are better understood, entering into us more deeply.

But how many of these Divine teachings through things pleasant and things painful will now be understood for the first time, awakening a tardy response, and a long-delayed thankfulness to the Great Teacher, —a response and a thankfulness which, we bless God, are still in time, still welcome to Him, still life-giving to our spirits.

But all this reminiscence and reflection belongs to that inner life in which we are alone with God. However large their space in that hidden life, however valuable as seen in the light of that kingdom of God which is within us, they arise in us, and do their good work, and we give thanks for them as meat which endureth unto eternal life without outward sign. And it is usually well that they be suffered so to be. Our past recalled and judged in the light of God is safely spoken of to God. But not so safely to man; unless, indeed, God's searching eye be still felt to be upon us. Otherwise our honest self-blame may, in being spoken aloud, become unconsciously self-complacency.

Some, doubtless, while so speaking aloud, have so lived under God's eye, and so purely sought by

speaking to help others, that their confessions have not hurt themselves while they have been profitable to others. But the meditative life to which old age calls, as the capacity for active life ebbs from us, is in general and rightly a hidden life, saved from the sense of loneliness, and from any unsatisfied craving for sympathy by that feeling of the Divine presence, and that reference to the Divine favour which is its essential interest.

For this is true, whatever the youth and manhood have been which old age is thus recalling. Found even late in life, the kingdom of God is that pearl of great price which is discovered with joy.

This is over and above what time, as it has passed, has wrought in us of preparation for eternity. *That* remains with us,—its measure according to the measure in which we have lived in the light of the truth of things. But I speak of what is to age still within its reach in the irrevocable past, good still to be extracted from it, though itself cannot be recalled,—a good still within the reach of age, which it is the special business of age to discern and make its own,—a present use of the past, which in value may far transcend its use in passing. And thus even the passing use has had in it an abiding element of good,—has been not meat which perishes only, but also, in some measure, meat enduring unto eternal life. As when, in early youth, the sunshine of the heart—which has shed its light on all things, giving added brilliance

even to the light of the sun—has in some measure been raised to a high and divine brightness by early piety; and when, as life has advanced, God has been acknowleged in His gifts, and His teaching, outward and inward, been received with some measure of the response of faith, so that all things were usually taken to His light;—even when it has been so in a high degree the retrospect will extract good from the past beyond what it yielded at the time,—more gratitude than was then awakened by God's goodness, more humiliation than was then felt under His rebukes. This will be true as to our best memories, while how much more will it be so as to the reminiscences of drawings of Divine love not yielded to, of searchings out of evil in us by the Searcher of hearts not meekly welcomed; not to speak of countless outward blessings which we have enjoyed without that giving of glory to God which is in being thankful.

Nor is it only in what belongs to our relation to God that the past of the best spent life may furnish old age with much which may be thus turned to good account, yielding in the retrospect higher moral and spiritual profit, but partially or not at all known at the time. The review of what we have been in our relation to men, also, will be found fruitful of the truest gain. Here, too, the retrospect will reveal short-comings in right-mindedness which we see with regret,—it may be, with much self-reproach. But the right feeling, as it is now cherished, comes with some

solace. This value, which is found in the memory of the past, when it is seen in the light of that kingdom of God which is within us, belongs properly to that inner life which we live in our relation to that kingdom, our gain in such recollections of the past being strictly moral and spiritual. But that gain is true and pure, and the diligent acquisition of it an employment of the enforced leisure of old age happy and healthful. For that light of God to which we are taking our past, saves us from a deceitful self-complacency in our retrospect, or a hopeless self-reproach. The divine ideal for us, with which we are comparing ourselves, forbids the one; the divine forgiveness, which is as the blue sky over us, forbids the other. For it is a part of that secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him, that the Holy Love, whose purer light reveals so plainly the shortcomings and unworthiness of the best to which we ever attain, at the same time delivers us from the self-despair which the sense of this unworthiness might produce.

4.

The highest interest in the past is that which it has when seen in the light of that kingdom of God which is within us. Reminiscences and reflections, as these belong to that inner hidden life in which we are each alone with God, are a present form of the meat which endureth unto eternal life. Happy hours enjoyed in

youth or manhood, if their happiness can bear the higher light in which it is recalled, awaken a fresh thankfulness, if, while they were passing, we were giving God the glory of being thankful,—if that glory was at the time withheld, it will be fully rendered now. In either case, the unenlightened, almost rebellious, regret that the past is past will be forbidden to us reaping a rich present gain from that irrevocable past. Sorrows, which, having been rightly borne, have yielded fruits of righteousness, will, in being recalled in the present calm, add to that precious fruit. All Divine lessons, whether first received in some of God's best and sweetest gifts, or in painful unmistakeable chastenings from our Father's Holy Love, will, in the retrospect, be clearer and have their impressions on us deepened when they are thus repeated.

And such processes the same memories recalled over and over again, will over and over again repeat. Thus will it be with passages in the former life in its relation to our God personally, and thus will it be also with passages in our past life in its relation to men, our brethren, according as in these we have borne ourselves in that highest aspect of the relation of man to man, viz., our conformity to that second commandment of love to our neighbours, which is the spiritual corollary of love to God,—the first and greatest commandment.

As to such reminiscences, also, the right feeling that

was present in the past recalled is now intensified,—what was wanting then is now supplied. There is one touching difference between remembered offences against the second commandment, and what we recall of offences against the first:—as to the latter there is not only space for repentance, but also for confession and the prayer for forgiveness; as to the former, while there is still room for repentance, the opportunity of confessing and asking forgiveness exists no longer, distance placing beyond our reach the brother whose forgiveness we would humbly ask and gratefully welcome. It may be death that has done this. In such a case the aged man may, in thought and feeling, seek his place beside the child of the hymn—

> "Oh! if she would but come again,
> I think I'd vex her so no more."

Yet sad as is the feeling of powerlessness to reach the heart we have wounded with the atonement of confession, the presence of the true Comforter brings the promised healing, according to the words, "Confess your faults that ye may be healed." So in the light of the Divine holiness and the Divine forgiveness, the past, as it is recalled, fills the present with blessing, and we grow at once in holy confidence towards God and lowly self-abasement. Thus the light of Christ does what the light of the law could not do.

In considering the 139th Psalm, we see the secret

of such a realisation of God's knowledge of us in the faith of God's precious thoughts concerning us (*v.* 17). In the fourth chapter of Hebrews we find the secret of the power peacefully and hopefully to meditate on God's searching word, in the knowledge that we have an "High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God." But no light of the divine idea for man, as declared in law apart from the Gospel, can do more than produce, if imperfectly apprehended, a delusive self-righteous hope,—if more deeply a self-realised, destroying despair.

The reminiscences and reflections so profitable in the kingdom of God that is within, have their proper region there. We know them, we profit by them, being alone with God. They are no part of that memory of the past which sometimes gives such a social interest to old age. If they being in him make the old man esteemed, it is because they affect what he is, not because they have a place in what he says. It is best that this remain so. There may be exceptions. The autobiographies of some men who have walked with God, often present to us portraits of their inner life; and while we read we feel that that sense of the presence in which they have felt what they record has so remained with them in recording, that they have not in giving it to us suffered loss themselves. But in general to offer for interest to others outside what has been most purely felt in our inner world is full of danger,—what was inward true self-

abasement passing into self-complacency in going out from us, as it passes from beneath the smile of God to seek that favour of man which bringeth a snare.

These reminiscences and reflections are not a chapter of autobiography. Had I more strength for such a task than I feel now to remain, I would shrink from such a task—would shrink from it in its most outward aspect, but still more in that inward aspect of self-revelation of which I have been speaking, had I been conscious of rich material, which I am not.

The reminiscences and reflections here offered have no such personal reference, nor do I offer them as a contribution to the history of the Church of our time. (Note R. H. S's. book.)*

But it has naturally happened to me, in the course of the long interval since the past, to which the reminiscences and reflections refer (now upwards of forty years), to give in conversation in a fragmentary way what I now record more fully and in order; and the interest which such recallings of the past have awakened,—together with my return in the evening of life to dwell on the shore of the Gareloch opposite to my former parish, with perfect leisure, seconded also by the wishes of friends,—has induced me to attempt at least a form of usefulness that seemed still open to me. But I speak thus with my work still to do.

* This reference is explained in the Introductory Narrative, p. 8.

III.

ENTRANCE ON THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY COMPARED WITH THE DAWN OF LIFE.

I.

REMINISCENCES of the commencement of my ministry come to me now with some of the feelings with which we recall the dawn of our life. They belong to what was the dawn of a new life, bright with a sunshine of its own—a new hope, and a new promise for the future. The life of boyhood and youth is, it may be said, *individual*, even after the period of passive opening to influences from surrounding circumstances, and an unreflecting development has been succeeded by years of active self-culture, and the consciousness of responsibility for the use made of time. But it is otherwise when the time for preparation for some sphere of active life is ended, and active life with its special relationships and responsibilities is come to us: then thoughts and plans embrace others as they did not before, and the change brings, or, at least, should bring with it an unselfish care of others, causing them

to be embraced in our hopes and fears, and to have a share in the fruit of our use of any powers we possess.

This difference of character between the life of the youth and the man is more strongly marked in the case of one entering on the pastoral care of a parish than in any other transition such as I refer to. Here the very essence of the new life is care for others; its business, ministering to others. Individuality passing into membership must lose much of its former special character;—the membership is headship. The sunshine that brightens the dawn in this new life is indeed new also. The instinctive unreflecting hope which gilds these first years,—the "sunshine of the breast," which, though before experience, and also not from faith, is, as we say, natural and beautiful in its season,—yet differs essentially from that higher hope, cherished in conscious light, which is fed by faith and not by mere instinct. But that very light, in some sense, hides the future almost as much as the instinct of youthful hope. The joy of the merchantman who has found the pearl of great price, though enough to strengthen and enable him to sell all that he has that he may buy that pearl, leaves him much to learn, in the subsequent process of parting with all, that has not been anticipated.

2.

The light, with which hope brightens all things in early life, has something that corresponds to it in that

promise for the future which gives courage and strength to the young minister; a bright dawn also to be often overclouded, so that looking back after many years it is seen as a bright past with many seasons of darkness between.

But, though this parallel is in one view one of likeness, it is much more one of contrast. The hope which has its root in the natural but unenlightened instinct of youth, and whose promise experience has not yet contradicted, is a perfect contrast to that hope which has its root in faith, and which in its essence experience ultimately ever confirms. The joy which accompanies all revelations of the kingdom of God—the pearl of great price making the sale of all that a man has that he may possess it easy—is, we know, often followed by many deeply-felt sorrows in the course of the subsequent process of duly following up that sale. But, whatever these sorrows be, they never make the sale to be repented of, being but the successive trials of the faith in which the sale was made—trials which, rightly used, only deepen our sense of the value of that inestimable pearl which is costing us so much.

Some have looked on the instinctive hope which gladdens youth as what in the highest light we may contemplate with pleasure, regarding it not merely as beautiful and seemly while it lasts, but as in some sense an *implicit* promise from Him who has given us a being, that existence will prove a good gift, though in a form far other than the day-dreams of the young

stranger on the earth picture. And seeing children as God's offspring, our faith that it is good for them that they have a being rests on higher ground than any consciousness of their own, or anything visible in the world into which they are born. But what that early consciousness really amounts to, or what there is in human memory to justify in sober truth the beautiful and fascinating Ode, *Intimations of Immortality*, which says that "trailing clouds of glory do we come from God who is our home," I do not venture to pronounce: only I cannot understand how, if faith has translated us out of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God, we can ever thus go back to the dawn of life for the "fountain light of all our day," the "master light of all our seeing." Not because of rays radiating from that point is the path of the just as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The Christian ministry, as one form of the Christian life, is a progress in hope, not a surviving of hopes; but still, as I have said, a certain brightness as of bright dawn marks its commencement, and is so recalled in the far retrospect, though the recollection of it be saddened by reminiscence of much that has been between. Still the prevailing feeling is thankfulness that all things, whether in themselves joyous or grievous, work together for good in the measure in which love to God has been the life in which they have been passed through.

IV.

HOPEFUL BEGINNING OF MINISTRY AT ROW.

1.

I RECEIVED ordination from the Church of Scotland, and was inducted to the Parish of Row, on the 8th of September, 1825.

I had been a *probationer* since July, 1821, when I received the license of the Church as a preacher. But these reminiscences do not go further back than my entrance on the work of a parish minister, when the responsibility and experience of a pastor came to give to thought and teaching a more vividly practical character, as well as the benefit of practical testing.

The long period of half a century, to the beginning of which I go back, has been one of very marked character in relation to Religion. This, I think, is felt by all, and not by those only who have lived through it, and to whom it has the special importance which a time has to us from being our own time. There can

be no doubt that religious questions engage more thought and more anxious thought now than they did fifty years ago. This is so with very varied results—some undeniably good, others which in their present aspect we must feel to be evil. The mental attitude of the time, as a whole, is such as makes any forecasting of our near future at least anxious and perplexing,—throwing us back for rest of mind and reassuring hope on our faith in the almighty and all-wise love that orders all things.

Personally, my circumstances have been such as have made the swelling tide of the course of thought on religion have, with all its eddyings, a special interest,—I mean beyond what it has to every religious man; and my reflections have often had such a relation to my early experience as a religious teacher as to seem to me to have something of that claim to attention which belongs to *experience*, if real and intelligently weighed. Reminiscences, and the reflections suggested by them, have thus from time to time come to be offered in conversation for their consideration to friends, especially to younger brethren in the ministry,—which I have hoped might be some contribution to their thinking. And it has sometimes been the case that they have met with a response, which now induces me to seek the attention of a wider circle.

This volume of Reminiscences and Reflections must, however, be received as quite fragmentary, and

in no way an attempt at a developed expression of a system of thought.

2.

I had been, as I have said, "licensed as a preacher," in 1821, but had had no fixed sphere of work as a preacher, nor special relation to any people, such as preachers, when "assistants," have. Consequently, the weight of the care of a people came on me for the first time now.

But whether freshly felt, or after some preparation from sharing in the charge of a parish, the weight of the responsibility of his new position does not usually prevent the young minister from accepting that position with welcome, and entering on his work hopefully. Many things, which it would be foreign to my purpose here to notice, contributed to this welcome and this hopefulness in my own case; so that to recall the commencement of my ministry is to me to recall the bright dawn of a new life.

Ordinary life, as it is a temporal life embracing time interests, may be said to have two dawns,—that of childhood and that of manhood. The first of these always looks brightest in the retrospect. An early youth while life is still—as one may say—individual, and also passive, is fullest of hope and has scarcely any cares. Manhood usually brings responsibility for others and the obligation for action and for discretion

in some form of business, as succeeding individual education. And though hope be present in entering on this new life with its needed powers to nerve our courage, it is not as the unreflecting instinctive hope which gladdened our young days.

If the commencement of our conscious life as the children of God and heirs of eternal life be parallel to the dawn of youth, the commencement of one's ministry may be said to be parallel to the conscious anxious life of manhood.

The parallel which the retrospect on which I now enter thus suggests is, however, fully more one of contrast than of likeness,—the contrast, I mean, between that light of hope which belongs to the life of time and that light of hope which belongs to the eternal life. The instinctive hopes of childhood, pure and free from care because anterior to experience,—the more considered and reasoning hopes of early manhood, which when brightest are qualified by the fear of possibilities which are but too often afterwards realised;—these are, indeed, contrasts to the hopes which, as individual or as belonging to the relation to others of pastoral life, belong to that better part which is not taken from those who make choice of it. In all its forms,—whether as it is an individual life in which we are alone with God, or as it is a life of membership in which, if one member suffers, the other members suffer with it,—the contrast between the Eternal Life and the life that perishes is according to that

word of the Lord,—"He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again."

Yet within the experience of that life whose hope maketh not ashamed are seasons in which a bright past is recalled under the shadow of a present cloud; —not indeed a shadow which contradicts that remembered brightness, as if its hopeful promise had failed. On the contrary, it is ever shadow which rightly considered only reaffirms that bright hope, for such shadows are the trials of faith by which faith is developed and strengthened.

And thus it is that to look back through an interval of nearly half a century to the commencement of my ministry is like the ordinary retrospects of life, in which bright beginnings, whether of youth or manhood, are recalled. Like, though—blessed be God—most unlike. But so far like, that sad feelings are not wanting; though most unlike, in that the more the path in which we have been led is seen in its proper light, the more speedily does the sadness pass away.

3.

The formation of the pastoral relation between a minister and a people is to both parties—the one and the many—an event of solemn interest, as it is also one of hopeful promise, the solemnity and the hope varying according as the importance of the relation entered into, and the encouragement to expect good from it, are realised.

But when the transaction is earnest and real—one also in which the mutual attraction and confidence are felt, which the expression, "an harmonious settlement" should imply—whatever interest religion has hitherto had to either party will be greatly intensified, and the sacred awe and joyful hope blended together will be the greatest of which pastor and people are found capable. The responsibilities that now arise are more clear and palpable, as they are those of the pastor; though they are not exclusively his by any means. Therefore, anxiety will divide *his* mind with hope, while *their* expectation will be more unalloyed.

But as his anxieties are proportional to his earnestness; and as that earnestness always tends to open men's hearts, and make their welcome more cordial; and as the welcome with which his gift of himself is accepted is an important element in his hope of usefulness;—his very anxiety becomes the occasion of encouragement.

In the retrospect all anxieties and encouragements are seen as a bright past—a time of sober but real joy of heart, which Memory now gilds even more than Hope did then; even although many anxieties have been justified, and some hopes have not been realised.

4.

Entrance on the life of a pastor, as the entrance on

a new life has (as we have seen) its proper dawn of hope—a dawn which continues, like that of life, bright to memory, whatever the day may have been. If, however, that dawn of hope has been such in any measure because of rays from the Sun of Righteousness, no subsequent experience can ever be—as is too often the case with the remembered brightness of our early days—a painful intensity of the bitterness of disappointment. Neither can this dawn of hope be like that in which hope is a blind instinct, which anticipates no clouds in its day. On the contrary, however bright the expectations of the young pastor, his heart is visited with many misgivings, were it only from his own conscious weakness and inadequacy to the work before him. These, doubtless, bring their own antidote, when they only cast him more simply on that strength, not his own, in which he is called to go forward. But his sense of weakness in himself may often exceed the strength of his faith. The hopeful welcome of the flock is indeed reassuring; and it is an instance of the law of compensation that the measure of his own sense of responsibility and weakness, blending with his hopeful trust, so deepens both his earnestness and the awe on his spirit, as greatly to contribute to his attraction to his future people—making their hope from his ministry all the brighter, and so their encouraging welcome all the more cordial.

The sense of responsibility which rightly belongs

to the forming of so important a mutual relation as that of pastor and people, is naturally greater on the side of the one than of the many: both because his realisation of that importance is likely to exceed greatly their average feeling at least; and still more because his consciousness is that of one engaging in a work,—theirs that of receiving a helpful gift. Nevertheless, my nearer subsequent acquaintance with my people made me to know that the sense of responsibility, as belonging to the new relation entered into, was not, on the day of my induction, so distinctively my own as it seemed to me,—that the pressure of hand with which I was acknowledged as their pastor at the church door had a deeply serious as well as kindly import. This, even as to the young, I learnt to have been the case by reference long after to that day in my intercourse with my class of young communicants. This I record for encouragement to young ministers who may read these pages,—a class of readers who will be much upon my mind while I write.

V.

ELEMENTS OF HOPE.

I.

IN recalling the elements of hope, which gave its brightness to the commencement of my pastoral life, I intend to notice only such as belong to "the common Salvation;" for these alone have a claim on the interest of my readers.

I now, when I write, look out the scene of my early labours. The special associations with persons and incidents, which now touch the chords of memory as they then did those of hope,—I mean kind welcomes of the young minister,—these I note not, being personal. Yet were they naturally and rightly valued at the time as elements of hope,—real encouragements to go forward. And let every young minister be thankful for such encouragement, however secondary and subordinate.

But it is for the elements of hope which are primary and are also the same to all, and not more or less to individuals, as the case may be, that I claim a place

in these reminiscences. The scene on which I now look out speaks of the personal past, as past, by the very changes that it presents. Not only is the generation that then welcomed me almost all passed away, but the part of most human interest of the scene itself, so to speak—the dwellings on the shores of this beautiful Gareloch are changed; and this most on what was my side of it;—changed,—progressed with the progressing time.

It more accords with my purpose in writing, to turn from the elements of early life which remain in my heart as memories of kindness, and from the spots that recall these to lift my eyes to the everlasting hills which abide unchanged, and to that over-canopying heaven which now as then is the symbol of the over-canopying love of God,—the love in the faith of which I met my people and parted from them; in the faith of which such meetings and such partings can be peacefully looked at together, because finding their place together in the counsels of Him who does all things well, ordering all things according to the counsel of His own will.

I venture to say that I met my people under the over-canopying love of God, the shadow of His wings, although I saw not the Divine Love as I came afterwards to see it, and though the faith of my people in God's precious thoughts concerning them was in general less enlightened than my own. I may say also that they met me in some dim feeling of

that love,—that their very welcome of me coming to them as their minister, no less than my hope in accepting that relation to them, had root in some faith however vague in the hope that is in God for man.

2.

In now meditating on that commencement of my ministry to which I look back as to a bright dawn, the considerations which ask attention, as having been elements in the expectation of usefulness with which I entered on my work, are these:—

(1.) The practical character of the interest with which my people regarded me.

(2.) The common ground on which we were meeting.

In these there was nothing peculiar or distinctive in my case. They are the hopeful aspects of entrance on the ministry. But there may be some advantage in dwelling on them for a little, as I see them now.

(1.) My relation to my people had a strictly practical import and interest. I was given to them as a help towards being what they ought to be,—what they ought to be in their relation to God, and also in all human relations. Need of help in what concerned their relation to God was, however, most present to their minds in welcoming me to be their minister; for the confession that they came short in what they owed to God would be more readily made than the corresponding confession in relation to their fellow-

men, for the relation of the second commandment to the first is seldom realised.

It was a promise of good that I was welcomed as bringing a needed help and with a warmth proportioned to the impression of my earnest desire and purpose to be such a help. This was so, although the interest in religion which this implied might not be very deep, and although the ideal of Christianity to which my people were taking themselves might, in all various measures, be short of the true ideal. (My own indeed was yet far short of what I subsequently learned to press on their faith as God's reasonable service.) But the obligation of religion, however dimly apprehended, was recognised; and this would secure some measure of openness of ear for me as a teacher seeking to illustrate and enforce that obligation.

(2.) We were meeting on common ground. This more in words and forms of thought, doubtless, than in the clear light of the truth of things. But some meaning right words had to them, even when a most inadequate meaning.

The answer to the opening question of the General Assembly's Shorter Catechism is this—"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever."

It would indeed be too much to assume that early familiarity with these well-chosen words implies being consciously in their light, or the habitual sense of the excellence of the gift of life, and the sacredness of all

life. But early acquaintance with these words—though they may have been at first repeated by rote—may have a part in the sense of the obligation of religion which gives his interest to a new minister in the eyes of his people. Whatever be its origin, and however feeble or vague it may be, that sense of religious obligation opens for him many ears and hearts; and he must therefore ever set himself to keep it alive by ministering to it its proper food.

He must say to himself, "Here my people and I are met on common ground; I desire to help them to be what God wills them to be; my position among them has this meaning or none at all. They also, on their part, welcome me as given to them to help them to be good,—to shew them what they ought to be. Our use of common words here really expresses a common meaning in the large view of the matter; though, doubtless, I cannot assume that the right words here have all the meaning, as used by them, that they have as used by me." On his own lips he indeed knows that they have a meaning far short of the great reality to which they are related. He also knows that, while he may in this view be in advance of the average mind of his people, there may be those among them who are far in advance of him; and such a thought will be one of encouragement.

I have never lost the feeling of the impression made on me on the very first day of my Parochial visiting—at the close of that day's work—when the

aged inmates of the last house to which I had been, came with me to the brow of the height on which their cottage stood; and the one solemnly said, "Give us plain doctrine, for we are a sleeping people;" and the other solemnly quoted the words, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

However, in the case of any really earnest ministry, the supreme importance of the *practical* obligations implied in the call on men to be conformed to the will of God is likely to be felt by the pastor as by one standing on a higher level than those to whom he ministers; and this even when his sense of shortcoming in his personal response to that call may be most humbling.

And, here I would notice—what, in recalling the past, I feel to be important—the value of the habitual realisation of the will of God in relation to man, as profitably determining a man's consciousness of his own position as a pastor, and the character of his teaching, both as to pulpit ministration and personal intercourse—a present will of the ever-present God over-canopying himself and his people as the blue heaven.

This if his faith habitually realises—and in the measure in which he realises it—will quicken his ministry with its proper life, and will also best help him to know what to speak and how to speak it. It will minister to him matter and tenderness, with due urgency, and at the same time patient discretion.

One has spoken of preaching as what should be speaking, "as a dying man to dying men." The meaning has been good, as expressing the weight which the near sense of eternity gives to the call to prepare for eternity. Yet may I not say that in the light of the love of God, and the will of that love to bless us in God, to preach as living the eternal life to men to whom God has given eternal life in His Son is the truer conception of our high calling?

I have used the word *practical* above, in relation to religious obligation, and as expressive of the essence of the value of the help given to people in the gift of a pastor. In so doing I use the word in the highest sense which it can bear:—I mean in its relation to the question, "What ought I to be?"

"What ought I to think?" "What ought I to do?"—these also are practical questions; and in special relation to "What ought I to be?" belong to the same high region with that question,—while in some sense the one question precedes while the other follows.

VI.

OPENING QUESTIONS OF THE SHORTER CATECHISM.

I.

THERE were many elements in the bright hopefulness with which I entered on my ministry [some of these have been already enumerated]; but I notice here only my conviction as to the will and purpose of God for man, and as to the Divine gift of Revelation in its relation to that purpose. These convictions I cannot state briefly in more fitting words than those with which from my childhood I had been familiar, as the answers to the opening questions of the General Assembly's Shorter Catechism. They are as follows:—

Question 1.—What is the chief end of man?

Answer.—Man's chief end is, to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever.

Question 2.—What rule hath God given to direct us, how we may glorify and enjoy Him?

Answer.—The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.

The process by which words expressing the highest truths become known realities to us is usually unconscious and unmarked. Many influences co-operate in bringing this to pass, when it does come to pass. Submission to authority passes into walking in light, and we may not be able to say when, or at what point, the confidence with which truth is held has ceased to be trust in light of others, and has become our own light.

I have likened to myself this difference between what *was* and what *is* to that between the life of the chicken in the egg, and its life after it has broken the shell; or in vegetable life, to the germinating life in the grain while it yet draws nothing from without, and that same life when, in the language of the husbandman, it has "come off the pick." But in truth, higher life, whether spiritual or only moral, is not even from the first a mere movement of submission to authority. The father charges his boy to speak the truth. He is not *alone* in so charging his child. Some sense of the rightness of the word is present, sealing the authority with which that word is spoken. Of this moral germ in the child we may say that it is the living word of the true Father, though not yet known as such . . . . .

I do not remember that I at all fell back on these questions and answers, as if they were my authority either for the conception of the will of God for my people in the light of which I was ever to see them, or for the confidence with which I was to use the Bible in the relation to that will claimed for it. But I believed and did not doubt that I was warranted in teaching my people that the end of their being was to glorify God and enjoy Him; and I accepted the Bible, as given to my people and myself, in reference to this end,—our common ground as teachers and taught.

This, as the first teaching of the Church of Scotland, has been contrasted with that simple statement concerning God, and our relations to God, which is the first theological teaching of the Church of England.

There may be an advantage in leaving the end of man's being to be an inference from the fact of God's relation to man,—an inference sure to be practically felt under the power of faith in these relations, even if not formally contemplated. But it is no small thing that such a conception of the end of man's being in relation to Him who has given man a being, should thus be the axiom and postulate with which a Church's teaching of religion begins.

2.

No man to whom the expressions "glorify God and enjoy Him for ever" have their high meaning, can

mistake the ordinary feeling as to the importance of religion, as if it implied any true apprehension of *that* as the end of man's being which is here acknowledged to be so. Yet something of this conception underlies men's habitual admissions on the subject of religion.

Not to enumerate such admissions, I may refer—as to that which indeed includes them all—to the admission that we ought to love God, that God's will is that we should love Him. To love Him would surely be to glorify and to enjoy Him. Of course I do not trace men's admissions on the subject of religion to their early familiarity with this first question of the Shorter Catechism and its answer; but that familiarity has a place among the many influences which have contributed to keep alive what sense of the religious obligation is still among us, and is that in the people which gives interest to their relation to their pastor.

And as a sense of the importance of religion is common ground to the pastor and his people, however great the distance between his thoughts on this subject and theirs, so the value of the Bible, as relating to religion, is to him and them common ground, however different may be the measures of their light here also. Strong words on the subject of this relation also have, as we have seen,* been put into the mouths of our children by the General Assembly's Catechism; and however these words or

* See the Answer to Question 2, as quoted above.

the former may be learnt by rote, they have had their part in producing that atmosphere of faith in Revelation which is, we may say, the mental atmosphere which in this land we breathe from the first. There is, no doubt, as great a distance and gulf between an enlightened appreciation of the Bible and the ordinary acceptance of it, as there is between a true apprehension of the end of man (as being to glorify God and to enjoy Him) and the vague feeling present in men's concessions as to the importance of religion. Yet he who most painfully feels this distance may still be thankful that his people are prepared to go with him to the Bible as to a revelation from God, divinely ordained and fitted to forward His own purpose in giving them a being.

I do not know whether we may accept the order observed in these two opening questions of the Shorter Catechism as some recognition of the revelation to Reason as being itself light from God,—a light which Revelation assumes, and to which it addresses itself. Is the recognition of the end of man's being *axiom first*, because it is here the axiom or postulate from which we are to proceed? And is the recognition of this foundation-conception of God's will for man that which justifies the claim of Revelation on our attention, that claim being its relation to this Divine will? This should be so, and I hope we may so think of it. Indeed, however much it has been long a tendency to depreciate natural religion in order to exalt revealed

religion,—to make little account of what we know of God independently of the Bible, in order to make us value the Bible more highly,—the logical conclusions from the strong things said in this sense have rarely, if ever, been avowed.

VII.

ASSUMED HARMONY OF REASON AND REVELATION.

I.

THE expression "only rule" in the answer to the second question of the Catechism may suggest more than it really has been intended to assert. At least, that conception of the relation of the gift of Revelation to the end of our being (as intended to glorify God and enjoy Him), which gives its value to the Bible, to pastor and people, and makes it their common meeting-ground, is not inconsistent with the due recognition of those elements of religion which are distinct from Revelation—I mean a capacity of knowledge of God as in men, and also dealings of God with men which universally address that capacity.

That God had never left Himself without a witness was, doubtless, the faith of those who selected the words of this answer—as it is the assertion of the Bible itself. Perhaps the expression "only rule" would have been explained as a claim for supremacy

and perfect adequacy. Certain it is that much that man is to believe concerning God, while taught by the Bible, is—it would be admitted—appealed to in the Bible as an antecedent and universal light. What God requires of man—his religious and moral obligations—while taught from the Scriptures, and enforced on the authority of Revelation, it was felt allowable and reasonable to connect with Reason and Conscience, and in accordance with the Lord's own words, "Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not that which is right?" The common ground on which I met my people did, certainly, as to my consciousness, embrace Reason and Revelation; and, however little they had defined such matters to themselves, they were prepared to accept an appeal to either—or I should rather say, to both.

Both—for they would always be thought of as one as to their ultimate authority and their obligations. And this rightly on the assumption that Reason and Revelation are both light from God. Their common origin taught this; but still more, if possible, their relation to each other. For Revelation assumed Reason, and came as its supplement; while, if a real Divine supplement, it could not be other than welcome to Reason, meeting a need likely to be more or less felt—sure to be recognised in the light that God gave to meet it and supply it.

And yet we know that the light of Reason and the light of Revelation are not always thus accepted as

from one fountain of light. On the contrary, two diverging tendencies of thought have here originated two opposite schools.

Our Divine Teacher addresses Himself to one capacity of being taught—first partially, and then more fully; the fuller utterance sealing and confirming the less full—so putting all honour upon it, while making claims on faith beyond what it had made. This is the conception on this subject which underlies ordinary religion; and, on the assumption that Reason and Revelation are severally what they claim to be, we should expect nothing else.

Nevertheless, within the circle of those who worship the one God, and who accept Reason and Revelation as teaching His worship, two tendencies are discernible, having their ultimate development severally in two schools—of which the one so depreciates Reason in honouring Revelation, and the other so depreciates Revelation in honouring Reason that, listening to them, we seem to have two teachers offered to us, between whom—though both from God—we have to choose as between two masters.

If the teaching of the pure Reason and that of unadulterated Revelation were heard together, no such choice would present itself. So far as they spoke of the same thing, both teachings would be one; Revelation sealing Reason—Reason securing acceptance for Revelation—their oneness declaring one Divine source; while, in that which Revelation added to the light of

Reason, there would be harmony with what was common, yet a development and progress which would justify the addition as not uncalled for, but having all the value of a further light to which it laid claim.

But, Reason—what men call Reason—is not always pure Reason, nor entitled to that obedience of faith to which pure Reason is entitled. Nor, on the other hand, is that which is to men a revelation the pure Revelation which God has given, or entitled to the faith which is the due response of the human spirit to the very voice of God. We may, as men speak, propose to ourselves to read the Bible without note or comment, and be open to the simple, natural impression of its words. But, can we do so? At least, who does so? The Bible is there before us without note or comment. Of what avail is this? The notes and comments are already in our own minds. We take them with us to our reading of the Bible. These have been in process of writing on the pages of our minds from our childhood.

Our Reformers took the Bible from the Church, and translated it into the vulgar tongue, and bade every man read for himself—read, understand, and inwardly digest. But they straightway began themselves to supplement the Bible by expositions, interpretations, catechism, and creed.

These mental prepossessions with which we go to the written Word vary greatly according as we have been taught; and this might cause us to suspect

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this influence, while we find the plain meaning of Scripture one thing to one mind, and another to another; and it is not in general difficult to put the finger on the prepossession which, in either case, has made the meaning appear so plain.

This has, doubtless, greatly interfered with the practical value of the Scriptures, and may in part have caused that turning from Revelation to Reason to which I have referred. But here, also, between us and the voice of the pure Reason there is as much interposed as in the case of Revelation; for, what are men's reasonings but comments on the utterances of pure Reason. How shall we shut out all comments of man to hear what God is saying to us? We may not depreciate Reason because of the difficulties in our way, any more than we are to depreciate Revelation because of the corresponding difficulties there. But the strange fact is that, though we might expect the difficulty in either path to be most felt by him who takes that path, it is not so. On the contrary, the very reverse of this is found to be the case.

2.

In accepting these conceptions of the end of man's being and of the relation of Revelation to that end, as determining the real character of the life of the ministry on which I was entering, and the hope in which I was to enter on it, I was only entering at

what was to me a door which stood wide open before me.

In now recalling the freedom which I then felt, with no other misgivings than such as are common to all earnest young ministers—to whom the greatness of the work before them is in one man encouragement, in another the natural source of many discouraging self-questionings—I may just notice here my assumption of the harmony of Reason and Revelation.*

Apart from experience and what we know of the history of thought, this assumption needs no justification. The harmony assumed seems inevitable. Reason and Revelation are forms in which the one Divine light comes to us. Revelation assumes Reason while it professes to supplement it, and this relation, while in one view it subordinates Revelation to Reason, in another recognises a most important dependency of Reason on Revelation. Yet the harmony which this should imply has been so far from being assumed that men have seemed to act as if these two utterances of the one Divine will were practically two masters, between whom we have to choose. And thus it has arisen that there is a class of minds who take Revelation to the bar of Reason in a way that is a practical denial of its

* It will be noticed that this section contains some repetitions of thoughts expressed in the preceding section. It has not, however, been thought desirable to omit or abridge either of these passages.

claim to be a Divine Revelation at all; while another class of minds ask for a subordination of Reason to Revelation, nullifying Reason altogether as a voice of God, nay, making it—I should rather say changing it into—a source of self-deception and error, against the misleading of which we have to be on our guard, and whose suggestions it may often be true faith in God's teaching to reject.

Of these two opposite errors the latter seems logically the more dark and hopeless,—that which, logically followed out, leaving us in the most hopeless darkness, takes away the possibility of faith;—unless indeed a faith which is neither trust in Reason nor trust in Revelation, but trust in the infallibility of a man made infallible by miracle for this end. This third—though believed to be in their option by so many—I do not wait to consider here. I am going back to a dawn of ministerial life, and considering this element in its sunshine, that I had undoubting confidence in the teaching of pure Reason and also undoubting confidence in the teaching of Revelation; and of those who fail to see here two utterances of one unerring teacher I say, that the alternative which seems most to honour faith in Revelation simply makes such faith impossible. For if Revelation finds nothing in man to which it can appeal, how is it to communicate itself to faith? He who, speaking to man in the name of God, depreciates Reason, is taking away the ground from under his

own feet. He who, under whatever misconception, deprives me of Revelation may still leave me Reason, but he who takes Reason from me, in so doing takes away Revelation also.

The most obvious explanation of this uncalled-for choosing between Reason and Revelation is—that however we may assume their harmony as both Divine in their source, we only see and know their harmony when we are in the clear light of *both*. Revelation, *really* understood, can never seem to contradict Reason also understood, but it is obvious that if either is misunderstood a seeming contradiction may well arise: still more if, as is often the case, neither is really understood.

He who puts its true price upon wisdom is thankful for this relation of Reason to Revelation, wherein there is so manifest a protection from misconception. But he finds that while it is a certain protection from error, it makes the quest of wisdom to be felt more difficult,—though only because it saves from the hasty acceptation of that as wisdom which is not wisdom. In this land—where the authority of Revelation is so generally recognised, and where indolence or thoughtlessness often prevents men from digging for wisdom as a hidden treasure—we more frequently see an unenlightened and superficial trust in Revelation working evil. Men appeal to the Bible and its authority with confidence, who have never duly weighed what in any case is a previous question,—

Do they understand what the Bible says? They assume that they do; they say that they take it in its plain and obvious meaning. They consider not how traditional interpretations have power to make a meaning appear plain and obvious, which may yet not be the true meaning. No student knowing the history of religious thought and of creeds can be ignorant of this.

A man may indeed know in his own experience what it is to accept that as the plain and obvious meaning, which yet he afterwards comes to see was not the meaning at all. But whether a man has or has not had this experience in his own studying of the Bible, he cannot be ignorant how differently the teaching of Revelation is understood by men who recognise the Divine origin of Revelation. It is surely marvellous how little this fact gives men pause. The Romanist insists on fixing our attention on this, and if he, by so insisting, cause us to consider wisely he does us an important service. We may—and if we understand the matter we must—refuse his inference that we must accept the authority of the Church for which he claims infallibility, or—as now—the authority of an infallible head and mouth of the Church—the Pope* . . . . .

* This section was left unfinished.

VIII.

VINDICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES ASSUMED.

I HAVE said that it was something, as an element in the hopefulness with which I entered on my ministry, that I could at that time assume, on the part of my people, a sense of religious obligation, however vague, and a value for the Bible and recognition of its divine authority, however unenlightened.

How, then, do these elements of hope appear to me now? Was I justified in looking on my people as in the will and purpose of God intended to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever? Had the Bible that reference to this Divine purpose which I believed it to have? and was I justified in making these assumptions in teaching my people, and in availing myself of the degree in which there were in them any corresponding convictions, however imperfect?

I may not be entitled to answer these questions to

myself on all the grounds that are embraced in my present knowledge. Certainly I did not, at the time which I am now recalling, see as I now do so high a purpose of God for man, as is implied in our being His offspring.

Some light there was, indeed, in the very conception itself of such a purpose of God which seemed to commend it. But, doubtless, my conviction on the subject was in part what may be called traditional faith, though it never was, in any season of earnest, serious thought, merely a faith resting on authority. On the contrary, the external authoritative teaching derived most of its weight from the inward response which it awakened, just as all teaching as to right and wrong did. By the time, indeed, which I am recalling the independent personal conviction had advanced greatly, and had very much got out of the shell of authority. And if it had been asked, "What certainty have you that the Father of your spirit wills that you should glorify and enjoy Him?" I think I would even then have answered, "I must believe it, if I believe in Him as the Father of my spirit at all."

But the many years, through the vista of which I look back, have brought with them many trials of my first faith, both intellectual trials and what I may call providential trials;—trials I mean in the demands of thought, and trials in God's own dealings with me,

by reason of which the faith of that early time is now, in my own consciousness, as gold tried in the furnace seven times heated; for they prove its claim to be a solution of the problem of existence and of all the problems which the details of the mode and circumstances of my existence present to thought and to feeling—a solution, every fresh use and application of which has added to the certainty that it is the true solution—God's own solution—given in love, along with that gift of thought by which He has made us to need a solution of the great mystery of life.

I cannot fairly, I feel, justify my early teaching on the ground of all I see and know now. Yet what further light is the fruit of all God's teaching in all these long years does in one view justify that early faith, in that it has been the development of the faith quickened in me then. Nay, I may say that it has been but the more distinct apprehension of a Divine teaching even then dimly seen,—the clearer hearing of a Divine voice that spoke to my spirit then: the dimmest vision, the faintest hearing, already justifying faith, already making responsible for faith.

That this is so is implied in the very nature of faith as a *life*. A creed or doctrinal faith may grow and be strengthened by the processes of a mere historical and Biblical criticism, or other intellectual labour implied in constructing a theology. And later

attainments in these ways need not have been in any sense implied in first convictions,—which, indeed, they usually modify, and not unfrequently overturn. But it is not so with the faith in which the life of sonship is quickened in man. The still small voice which says, "My son, give Me thine heart," not only comes to me from the heart of God, whose precious thoughts concerning me are in number as the sand of the sea, but is now saying, implicitly, all that is contained in these countless precious thoughts. For could I see the heart of God which is uttering itself in the words, "My son,"—could I know the will and purpose of God for me which is declared in the demand, "Give Me thine heart." "My son," this tells what I am to the heart of God; "Give me thine heart," this tells the will of God concerning me, what the Father of my spirit desires as to me His offspring, with what manner of blessedness the blessed God who has given me a being would make my existence blessed.

All accessions of Divine light, all progress in the knowledge of the love of God to man, in whatever form these come to us, while they shed light back on the "beginning of confidence," do so only as revelations of what was in that first word of God which first quickened the life of sonship.

I have in this view often felt, in hearing discussions as to the place and value of Historical Christianity,

that had God imparted to us by intuition all that by Historical Christianity He teaches us, we should, in that Divine light, have anticipated Historical Christianity. We should have seen, that is, in the fountain of the Divine love all that we believe as the form and manner of its outflowing. We should have anticipated the Incarnation and the Atonement,—our life of sonship,—the gift of the Holy Spirit,—the communion with the Father and the Son in the Spirit,—our being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. This, indeed, is only saying that if we knew by intuition the love of God to man, we should know the form which it would take—has taken.

Is this a thought which makes Historical Christianity less divine to me,—makes it possible for me to conceive of it as a myth,—permits me to congratulate myself on what it has taught me of the love of God, and, at the same time, to make little account of the facts of the Divine procedure in the light of which I so know God, nay, to refuse credence of them as facts? Nay, the more I am by them raised into that light of Divine love in which I should have anticipated them, the more is their certainty as realities assured to me. A light in which I could have anticipated that they would have been is the absolute establishing of the faith that they have been.

I say, therefore, that the fuller light of the love of God, in which I now recall the confidence in which

I met my people on the ground that the end of man's being is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever, is justified to my own mind in the retrospect by all subsequent development and enlargement of my faith; because, in truth, progress here has been, in one view, development.

I have been only coming to understand now what was implied in its being the end of man's being that he should glorify and enjoy God for ever. That postulate or axiom, implicitly present in all religious teaching, has been contained in all true doctrine—all reasonable practical exhortation. What was I labouring with my people to bring about as to them? Was it not from the first and ever to lead them to glorify God—to teach them to enjoy God? Would anything short of this be Salvation? What other than this is the meaning of Salvation?

I have used the words "postulate or axiom," because Christianity is, to my mind, related to our relation to God as His offspring, as the whole superstructure of mathematical truth is to the postulates and axioms first offered to our acceptance. These have all subsequent demonstrations implicitly present in them. It is said of Newton that he read "The Elements of Euclid" right on, and saw the truth of the propositions without the help of the demonstrations. Such a mathematical intuition, whether he had it or not, would be parallel to such an intuition

and love as would read and receive the whole Gospel of the grace of God in the light of that word of God to man—"My Son, give Me thine heart."

But we do not set out in this fulness of the light of divine love: the parallel is rather with the slow progress of ordinary students of mathematics. Only the soundness of the foundation laid in axioms is ever increasingly proved by the superstructure it bears of mathematics pure and mixed. . . . .

IX.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS WITH REFERENCE TO "PREVIOUS QUESTIONS."

I.

THE assumption of the purpose of God for man, and of the relation of Revelation to that purpose, was the natural starting-point of earnest minds at the time to which I am going back. I trust that, to most, it is so still. But half-a-century has brought changes in this region of thought beyond what any half-century can have brought before; and the earnest thinkers of a younger generation find themselves called to deal with questions not discussed then, or known only to a few as forms of German thought. The errors which I have noticed above, namely, the subordinating of Reason to Revelation—the subordinating of Revelation to Reason—and the subordinating of both to the Church assumed to be infallible—are, as distinctive of three schools of thought, developments of a time of increased interest in theology; while other deeper questions—or, at least, of seeming depth—are enter-

tained which offer themselves, in reference to what was our starting-point, as *previous questions*, demanding to be settled first.

The many forms of thought, from Calvinism to Socinianism, which found place within the compass of the acceptance of the Scripture as a Divine Revelation—leaving room for questions as to what the Bible taught, but no room for a question as to the authority with which it taught—all this is separated by a wide gulf from the questions to which I now refer. I mean such questions as these:—"Is the supernatural believable?—Is a revelation possible?—Do we know enough of God to enable us to take this question to the light of His character, or to entitle us to say what is worthy of Him?—Do we know God at all?—Is He known?—Is He knowable?—Do we even know that He is?"

The paths by which these questions are reached are several, and severally stop at different points. These paths are:—Historical Criticism, Science, Psychology, Metaphysics—all names of important realities which have a true claim to be branches of human knowledge—paths of thought not forbidden. Therefore, no one who believes in God, and who accepts the claim of the Scriptures to be a revelation from God to man, can regard any evil results attending on these paths as inevitable—or such as can be escaped only by shutting them up. There must be a mind in which they can be trodden in safety—a single eye

with which if we tread them, we shall walk in light. As permitted regions of thought, we cannot hesitate to recognise Historical Criticism, Science, Psychology, Metaphysics—even while we painfully feel that many minds visit them to their great loss; nor, because men have met doubt where the necessary harmony of all truth might have justified the hope that they would have found increase of certainty, is any conclusion justified but this—that, in these cases, the paths ventured into have not been really adhered to.

But this is not all. These enquiries, however open to us, are not paths on which we are called to enter. They are the few who are called to enter on any of them,—scarcely any are qualified to enter on them all. Therefore, none of the questions which belong to these regions can be *previous questions* in reference to that faith as to the chief end of man's being, and as to the relation of Revelation to that end, which makes its claim on all men, and which, therefore, must make that claim on grounds which all can understand, and the truth of which all can know;—know with a certainty fitted to bear the weight of the great practical decision involved, for that decision is the bestowal of ourselves—of our hearts—of all our powers.

This is certain: and seeing that it is so we must feel called, in a time like this, to direct the attention of the few to whom I now refer to that which asks the acceptance of all on grounds appreciated by all, rather than to admit—even to the smallest extent—the

justness of the claim to be here entertained as previous questions, which is set up for the questions with which these few are occupied, whether wisely or unwisely. If wisely, we believe that they are in the way of receiving confirmation of that which, without reference to their studies, we call on all to believe: if unwisely, then whatever be these divergences from true thought, their best hope of being brought right is to come down from any fancied vantage-ground which they have seemed to themselves to occupy, to the land on which the common salvation commends itself to common man. This is the practical conclusion to which I am led in relation to a generation of earnest minds tried by questions by which I was not myself tried, but as to which I truly desire to come under their burden in all tenderness of spirit. They have fallen in one view, on an evil time; but this is so or not according as they take it. It is the time chosen for them as that in which they are called to fight the good fight, and lay hold on eternal life; and this choice for them is His who suffers not men to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear, but with every temptation makes a way of escape.

2.

The instinctive belief in an external world common to man and beast, on which all action towards things without the sentient being proceeds, may be theoretically put aside as unphilosophical or unscientific, and

a theory as to sensation and the external cause of sensation be accepted as a development of Berkeleyanism. But, however a paper like Huxley's * may use the language of faith in such a theory as if we knew nothing but modes of our own feeling and thought, all actual life will ignore such a theory, and those to whom it most commends itself practically bear themselves as if they had never heard of it.

So also, as to all metaphysical relaying of foundations in the region of Religion, were the destructive process ever followed by a constructive process that satisfied the destructive intellect, such constructive result could never meet man's universal need in his relation to God.

Is it not obvious that such reconstructions must remain at the best available only to the circle capable of weighing the previous destructive processes and passing through their deep waters to firm land beyond? Would not the mass of men have either to abide on the old ground of instinct, proved by hypothesis to be fallacious, or to take the new ground for granted on the authority of those few who were assumed to understand the matter? In such a proceeding the metaphysicians must needs stand in the same intermediate position between truth and the many who are asked to believe, in which the Church stands according to the Roman Catholic dogma.

* See the paper entitled, "On Descarte's 'Discourse,'" in Professor Huxley's "Lay Sermons."

In such a case as the substitution for the habit of thinking of the sun as going round the earth, of the true faith that the earth turns on its axis, ordinary acceptance of the seeming contradiction to sense is a faith in men of science; and those who accept the fact are as little embarrassed as those who understand the demonstration, by the sun's seeming rising and setting.

But it would be very different if what would be a parallel subverting of all the assumptions of Religion were demanding our faith. For all practical purposes the earth feels as solid under our feet, the light of day as adequate to our need of light, whether our faith be the old or the new. But to part with a living God for a system of unchanging law, or even to part with a Father of our spirits for an unknown source of our being, or even to part with God revealed in Christ for any form of simple theism;—such changes realised, accepted in faith, telling according to their proper nature on our minds, affect practically our consciousness of existence and its interests, and our ideal of ourselves and what we ought to be.

NOTE.—A fuller discussion of the subjects referred to in this chapter will be found in Part III., under the heading, 'Faith and Doubt.'

PART II.

PROGRESS OF THOUGHT AND TEACHING.

I.

CHARACTER OF EARLY TEACHING.

1.

I ENTERED on my work as a parish minister in the unquestioning faith that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever. In the light of this faith I saw the people committed to my charge, as I saw myself; and my interest in their well-being, as in my own, had thus its spring in the Divine fountain of a will of God concerning us, which—while it was the true key to all practical life and all its relations—was very specially connected with our relation to each other, being in truth the very ground on which we stood together as a minister and a people.

Further, I entered on my work in the unquestioning faith of the Divine gift of Revelation, and of its inestimable value in connection with the will of God that we should glorify and enjoy Him.

As to the mutual action of these two beliefs, and

the preparation for understanding the Scriptures which there is in the faith of the will of God that we should glorify and enjoy Him, and the strengthening and enlightening of that faith which is received in reading the Scriptures as given for this end:—this I rather experienced than thought of. But I did experience it with the result of a conscious raising of my conception of the Divine Ideal for man, and an ever-deepening sense of the adaptation of Revelation to the end of helping the realisation of that ideal.

Many years afterwards, when pressed by an advocate of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, as to the relation of faith in the Scriptures to faith in the Church, with the appeal—"You object to our saying that we receive the Bible from the Church and on the authority of the Church: let me ask you, how do you Protestants receive it? is it not really in the same way?"—while I could not deny that it was so practically if not theoretically, I felt able to reply that it was not so, however, in my own case; that my faith in Revelation had this root that I recognised the God who spoke to me in my own heart as speaking to me in the Bible.

I had only gradually come to occupy this ground consciously and clearly; and at the first, had such an appeal been pressed, would probably have rather turned to questions of Evidences, such as engage us in our preparatory studies. But implicitly, though not explicitly, this manner of confidence in the Divine

authority of Revelation was in me early, being greatly developed by the exclusive study of the Scriptures to which I confined myself in my pulpit preparations,—not of set purpose, saying to myself that I would not take help from the thinking of other minds, but because I found the Scriptures speaking clearly enough for my need; and as to what remained dark I was contented so to leave it.

The importance—as guiding us as teachers—of the principle contained in the Apostle's words, "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," I did not indeed then see as I have since come to see it. But the experience of receiving all that was life to my own soul in this way, and my conviction that it was not received in this way by those whom I taught—was not really received with a living faith—had practically the same effect on my teaching as would be produced by a purpose to leave all that I had ever read on the subject of Evidences out of account, counting only on the internal authority of truth.

How often have I in later years—since the subject of Evidences has become one of so much more difficulty than I in those days knew it to be—been thankful that from the first my teaching proceeded on ground which Historical Criticism could not touch! —ground also which it was righteous and reasonable to take in dealing with a people in possession of the Bible, and whose responsibility as to accepting it or

refusing it must turn, not on its history, of which they were incompetent to decide anything of their own proper knowledge, but on its contents, and what it teaches man to believe concerning God, and the duty God requires of man.

2.

The natural effect of having the mind fixed on the end of man's being as the glorifying of God and enjoying of Him, and the unquestioning acceptance of the Bible as a divine gift having its value in connection with this end, was to give special interest to those portions of Scripture, and those aspects of truth, which most obviously and unmistakably connected themselves with this end. And the practical exigencies of pastoral work, as distinct from abstract speculative thought, favoured this result.

Thus large portions of Scripture were left out of account in my teaching, both in preaching and in private intercourse,—not of set purpose, nor at all in the way of making distinctions as to the inspiration of the several parts of the sacred volume; neither as refusing, as yet, the accepted interpretation of such passages as by that interpretation were rendered mystical, or relegated to the region of thought to which the subject of Predestination and Election belong; though many passages, long passed by as

not practical, because assumed to contain this teaching, have subsequently been seen in that light of their true meaning in which they prove to be most practical enunciations of the Gospel. But at that time I did not engage my people's attention with questions which even those who attach most importance to them would rather keep in the back-ground in dealing with minds just awaking to the importance of Salvation,—asking, "What must I do to be saved?" and so often distressed themselves and embarrassing their teachers by taking up the subject of Divine decrees with a personal reference to themselves.

It illustrates this character of my early teaching that in "Diets of Catechising" I chiefly dwelt on the offices of Christ as a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, as expressing the relation in which all were to regard Him in reference to themselves.*

What God wills man to be, and what God has done, is doing, and will do if we yield ourselves to His will, in order that that will may be realised in us:—this, in few words, was the sum and substance of my teaching. I had great sympathy with the seventeenth of the Thirty-nine Articles;† and while I did not

* See Questions 23-26, in the Shorter Catechism.

† The reference is probably to these words of the Article,—"For curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall."

question the rightness or the healthfulness of the comfort which advanced Christians derived from meditation on Election and the connected faith of the *perseverance of saints*, the necessity which pressed on me was the need of my people of whom I could not think as having attained to this high level.

I have since come to see this subject in the light of such words as—"Whose house are we, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." * But I was not dealing with persons who had even that "beginning of confidence" of which the Apostle speaks; and the first marked step in my course as a teacher was connected with this very point,—that beginning of confidence which a true apprehension and acceptance of the Gospel implies.

It was here that I found myself coming to conclusions, and making consequent demands on my people, as to which my teaching was first called in question, and was subsequently condemned as error under the name of "Assurance of Faith."

This, then, is the first thing of which I have here to speak. How did I come to the convictions as to Assurance of Faith at which I arrived? and what was their practical importance in my mind that I so earnestly urged my own convictions on the faith of others?

I feel it important to any value which this retro-

* Heb. iii. *vv.* 6 and 14 (combined.)

spect may possess to fix attention on the fact, that the path here was not speculative but practical;—that is to say, it was in the endeavour to teach men to glorify God and enjoy Him, and to turn the discoveries of Revelation to their proper account in reference to this result, that I came to see—as I believed, and continue to believe—the subject of Assurance of Faith in its true light.

II.

DIFFICULTIES FOUND TO EXIST IN EARNEST MINDS.

ALL earnest occupation with our relation to God naturally leads to self-knowledge, and some true estimate of what we are in the light of Conscience and of Revelation. The immediate result is sure to be a greater or less measure of self-condemnation. We find we are not what we ought to be; and as we see more and more clearly, and our spiritual eyes become made to the light which we are letting in on our inner man, our perception of the distance between what we are and what we see to be the Divine ideal for us becomes more painfully humbling. We may shrink from this unwelcome self-consciousness, and there will not be wanting voices from without to second the temptation within to question the authority of what claims to be the united judgment of Conscience and Revelation; and we may seek escape from its imperativeness by some unmeaning admission of the abstract excellence of the ideal which condemns

us, combined with the self-excusing refusal to accept it as applicable to ourselves, on the ground that it is too high an ideal for us circumstanced as we are and frail as our nature is.

We may, however, resist this temptation: as we consider more we may come to see the truth to be, that an ideal lowered to what we are would indeed be no gain to us but a fearful loss,—would be indeed the shutting out of all high hope. And thus the condemnation so shrunk from may be more welcome than the assumption that we are all that God wills us to be. But, as we advance in this path, either of two things will happen, according as the will of God, to the light of which we are resolutely taking ourselves, is to us a law or a gospel.

As a law, and simply a righteous demand on God's part, the will of God for us is a light which only reveals what is wrong, but brings no deliverance—no help to becoming what is right (Romans vii.); while, as the Gospel, the same will has in itself the power, being welcomed in faith, to realise itself in us.

'Seeing this (dimly but with gradually increasing clearness), I laboured to combine the pressing of a high standard as to what God calls us to be, with an equally earnest pressing of the power of the Gospel to accomplish the will of God in us. But this teaching, as a whole, I found practically working more as a law than as gospel; that is to say, I found the ideal of what men ought to be realised more

in fear than in hope. And this more and more in proportion as that ideal came to be the true ideal, such as the words of Christ contemplate—"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Anxiously considering this result (and with the help of that freedom of expression as to those difficulties which their own anxiety prompted on the part of the most earnest), I came to see that, in reality, whatever I preached, they were only hearing a demand on them to be—not hearing the Divine secret of the Gospel as to how to be—that which they were called to be. Of this they themselves had no suspicion; they said, and honestly, that they did not question Christ's power to save, neither did they doubt the freeness of the Gospel or Christ's willingness to save them; all their doubts were as to themselves.

This meant, it was clear, that between them and the comfort of the consciousness of a personal possession of Christ as a Saviour they vaguely conceived of a something by which they were to make Christ their own,—a condition proposed to them, the consciousness of compliance with which would introduce them to the enjoyment of salvation. This something they attempted to speak of as repentance, faith, or love, or "being good enough," which last expression gave really the secret of their difficulty. Christ was to be the reward of some goodness—not perfect goodness, but some

goodness that would sustain a personal hope of acceptance in drawing near to Him. In this mind the Gospel was practically a law, and the call to trust in Christ only an addition to the demand which the law makes,—an additional duty added to the obligation to love God and to love man, not the secret of the power to love God and to love man.

Seeing this clearly, my labour was to fix their attention on the love of God revealed in Christ, and to get them into the mental attitude of looking at God to learn His feelings towards them, not at themselves to consider their feelings towards Him. As to these, I taught them to be consistent in their admission of their not being what they should be, and also to know that they could not by any blind effort make themselves what they should be—however a sense of the importance of salvation might move them to the effort,—and so to come under the natural power of the love, the forgiving, redeeming love which was set before them.

Those who are familiar with our Scottish Theology, and know how early it is taught to our children, may, perhaps, be inclined to trace to Calvinistic preconceptions the difficulty found in endeavouring to lead these earnest minds to look simply at the discovery of the mind of God towards sinful man, which He has made who came to reveal the Father. I do not remember that it was so, though I have had theological fatalism fallen back upon when other

attempts to evade my urgency in pressing the obligations of religion have consciously failed; and, while the excellence of the ideal of what ought to be was not denied, the obligation to be it was rejected on the ground of Divine predestination.

What I met with in the earnest minds to which I refer was different. It was a difficulty in rising to the conception of free grace,—that is, to the apprehension of a love in God to us which is irrespective of what we are, and is sustained by the contemplation of what He both wills us to be and is able to make us. This apprehension attained, Christ is no longer thought of as intended to be the reward of anything in us individually, according to the vague thought that moves to blind efforts to appropriate Christ by some mental movement on our part. He is known as ours by the grace of God, according to the love which, while we were yet sinners, gave Christ to die for us. The subtlest form of self-righteousness is that which it presents when self-condemnation is made a reason for not venturing to trust in Christ with a rejoicing confidence. I found no way of dealing with it so effectual as the demanding from those who seemed to themselves to have no doubt of the "all-sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour," the feelings of peace and joy in believing in Him which could alone accord with the reality of such a faith,—the actual knowledge of such a Saviour as theirs by the gift of God.

III.

MODE OF DEALING WITH SUCH DIFFICULTIES.

I.

I WAS dealing with minds that had no misgivings as to the claims of religion; neither had they the feeling that these as I urged them were anything else than what they were accustomed to hear preached. They were taught to be good; they were taught to believe in Christ. Now whatever vague suspicions they might have had that they were not meeting the call to be good were being confirmed, and the distance between what they were and what they ought to be was having a light shed upon it for which they were unprepared, and which gave them pain while still they felt it to be light; but there was not along with this any corresponding discovery as to their faith in Christ, or any fresh light bringing the help to their hope as Christians, which the deepened sense of their own sin and need of a Saviour made so desirable. On the contrary, they were assuming that they knew all that they were asked to believe as to Christ, and that they believed it all.

It was an exceedingly great relief and comfort to perceive, as I saw clearly, that they were deceiving themselves; that, while the evil of their own state and consequent need of Christ was becoming more a true consciousness, all their supposed faith in Christ consisted in empty words—the form of an unrealised dogma—their holding of which availed them nothing, or only increased their painful self-condemnation, taking the form of an addition to the amount of undischarged duty, adding the obligation to trust in Christ to the obligation to love God and man, instead of finding in Christ the fountain of love to God and man.

The simplest and most direct course in dealing with this form of self-deception—by which the Gospel was nullified as a gospel, and came to be only an addition to the burden of the law—was to fix attention on what the Gospel revealed to faith—its claims to be a gospel, and to insist on the response of feeling which accorded with its nature, refusing to acknowledge as faith in it anything that did not fulfil this condition.

This was the teaching which, under the name "Assurance of Faith," came subsequently to be called in question; not, however, because the possession of peace and joy in believing was considered impossible or dangerous by those who taught that a man's confidence towards God was to be entirely a trust in Christ and God's acceptance of him for Christ's sake.

Given a pure simple trust in Christ, and all peace and joy in believing was held warrantable—nay, natural, and a true giving of glory to Christ; and when uttered on a death-bed, or, it might be, the expression of a freedom reached after a period of much distress on account of sin, or attained after years of earnest religious living, men could rejoice at it and give thanks for it.

How such looking altogether away from self and personal deserving, and finding peace and joy purely and simply because of what was seen in Christ, could be the ideal of Christian faith, and yet the experience of it be thus limited;—how (looking at the limitation recognised) such peace and joy in believing should be safe on a death-bed and not safe in the fullest vigour of life, or allowable after the previous history specified, and not safe irrespective of such history, if indeed true in itself and a present reality:—this it is difficult to understand, looking at the elements of the faith in question viewed simply in itself.

If I am in a light in which I see and confess my own sin, and neither excuse it nor think by any act or feeling of mine to atone for it, and if I am also in the light of the forgiveness of God in Christ, and so shut out from self-trust by the one knowledge, and so emboldened to trust in God by the other knowledge, that I am really delivered from self-trust, and having a living trust in God quickened in me,—is not my state sound and right before God, and in perfect

accordance with His grace in Christ? Am I not strong for all good abiding in it? Is not my one danger not abiding in it? Can its safety or healthfulness depend on anything else than what it is in itself? "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

But it would be unfair to say that such a mental attitude towards self and towards Christ would be regarded with mistrust, or its claim to be that abiding in Christ to which we are called. It was the danger of self-deception that was feared.

As to this, I saw (1.) that the light of life is its own protection. He that so knows himself and Christ in the light of Christ has the witness in himself.

(2.) I further saw that the natural and direct test of such a faith was its natural and immediate fruit, namely, being reconciled to God, conscious harmony with God, rest in God; the natural inevitable welcome of our dependence on Him, of all His Will as to us;—as to that which is within, His choice for us become our choice for ourselves; as to that which is without, that welcoming of His ordering of what concerns us which is natural and inevitable in the light of the gift of Christ.

(3.) I saw the evil consequences of distrust in the witness which he that believes has in himself—of which the elements are just the elements of eternal life. This distrust had led to a regular system of testing faith by its fruit. Fruits of faith

are, indeed, given as a test to be applied to the professions of others, or—it may be—to the doctrine they teach. But how can our own faith be thus tested? We may, and we should, so test what we are called to believe; and we must have evidence of its tendency before submitting to it, or accepting it as of God. But to ask me to stand in suspense as to my trust in Christ—whether it is a right and saving trust—making this depend on the consciousness of fruits of holiness in myself,—this is really to suspend trust—that is, to suspend faith—until I am conscious of the effects of faith: a process which, if intelligently followed, obviously makes fruits of faith impossible.

2.

The interest was very deep and solemn with which I saw many awaking to a real sense of the importance of their relation to God, and to the painful consciousness that they themselves were not, in that their highest relation, what they ought to be. However little the confession that it was so might amount to, or however dim the light in which it was made, that light was a dawn of true light for which to be thankful; although, in many cases, the intense self-condemnation awakened so long preceded any glimpse of the light of what God is in His relation to us as revealed in the Gospel, that it made my part as a teacher a very anxious one.

I was, however, seeing clearly the hope that was in God for these, though they were not seeing it themselves. And to this I laboured to raise their thoughts, not questioning the justness of their self-blame, nor by word or look of indulgent sympathy seconding the delusive self-comforting suggestion that they were not worse than others—that the Divine ideal for them was less than, in the light of Conscience and Revelation, it was beginning to be seen; but, accepting all their hard sayings against themselves, and admitting that they might be much harder and yet true, I comforted them by reminding them that these discoveries of their own sinful state, though discoveries to them, were not discoveries to God—or anything not contemplated in the Gospel—or anything the consciousness of which could rightly hinder their joyful welcome of the Gospel, which assumed that they were sinners needing mercy, and revealed the very mercy which, in the judgment of God, met their need.

There is much confusion incident to our first earnest thoughts in this region, but in itself there is nothing difficult to understand in the statement—that the peace with God to which the Gospel calls us is simply the contemplated result of the discovery which the Gospel makes of the love of God in its relation to us as sinners; that, therefore, it has no reference to degrees of sinfulness, or anything in this view in which one person differs from another.

But, in experience, I found it the most difficult thing to make such language even intelligible when I was most anxious to impart the comfort of this great truth. Habitual ease of mind on the subject of Religion, in which faith in the Divine forgiveness is no element —the need of it not being felt—does not, in passing away, easily give place to a peace of so opposite a nature as that which, in the deepest realisation of our need of Divine forgiveness, the faith of that forgiveness brings. Indeed, faith in a true forgiveness becomes difficult in proportion as a real need of it is felt.

We easily believe that God will forgive while we do not feel that there is much to forgive. But we are far indeed from having any conception of the pure forgiving love which we really need, and which the Gospel reveals. This the teacher soon has forced on his conviction, in finding any form of conditional mercy more readily believed than free grace.

But it is only in the full light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, that any true apprehension of our own sin can co-exist with perfect peace with God.

3.

There is nothing strange in the statement that "the peace with God to which the Gospel calls us is simply the contemplated result of the discovery which the Gospel makes of the love of God in its relation to

us as sinners, and has no relation to degrees of sin, or the difference in this respect between man and man;" for that "God hath concluded all under sin that he might have mercy on all." On the contrary, it is so natural an account of a salvation for sinners, that when we apprehend it, we feel that if salvation was to be it must have this character; and this connection becomes no unimportant element in any faith. For so regarded, the glory of God, and the power to save man which belongs to the Gospel, become visible to us; and more and more so as our own spiritual understanding is developed, and that name of God which is said to be glorified and the nature of that salvation which is said to be bestowed, are understood by us,—ceasing to be mere words, or at best intellectual conceptions, and become to us the spiritual realities which they are. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help found," is felt to be the only hope-quickening word that could come forth from God to self-destroyed Israel.

This necessary character of freeness, as opposed to having any conditions attached to it, was early clear to me. The end to be accomplished was that men should glorify God and enjoy Him. The revelation given in connection with this end seemed to approve itself as from God in nothing more unequivocally than in its fitness to accomplish this result of the love of God to man which commends itself as this, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. The power of the

faith of such a love to reconcile man to God seemed very clear; while it was as clear that in order to do this, the human heart and spirit must be placed under its power by a personal faith,—a faith in which the love revealed was as personal to the individual man as the sense of his own sin was, because of which this special form of Divine love—love to sinners—was needed by him.

There was much that I did not then know as I seem to myself to know it now: more especially the nature of the Atonement, and its direct relation to Christianity as the perpetuating in us of the life of Christ, and of that mind in Him which was the essence of the Atonement, and made Him a fit foundation-stone and precious corner in that spiritual temple which is the Church of the living God. These have come to be clear to me, filling the words, "the unsearchable riches of Christ" with a meaning far beyond what they had to me at the beginning. Sin and holiness,—not destruction and salvation in what may be called their aspects of suffered pain or infinite happiness,—were the great opposed realities which gave its importance to my work as a minister of Christ, and were to be found implicitly or explicitly in all my teaching. But the conviction of the freeness of the Grace of God possessed me early, as well as of the safety and importance of keeping its character of freeness always in the foreground.

I use the words "safety and importance," and in

this order, because I first saw the safety of the conviction that God freely pardons all my sins as the personal application to myself of the death of Christ for sin; because in this personal faith the power of the love of God revealed in Christ pressed on the heart and spirit with its full force—a power pure and holy and saving in proportion to my spiritual apprehension of sin and forgiveness, (that forgiveness which is with God that He may be feared); but real and effective in the measure in which it was personal. I came to add "importance," because the unpersonal character of the faith in Christ—if that be not a contradiction in terms, as certainly it is in thought, for that is not faith in Christ which is not personal,—the unpersonal character of the faith in Christ, which was often professed, seemed to me the explanation of its powerlessness,—its powerlessness to produce the more immediate fruits of peace and joy in believing, and also its further practical fruits in the renewal of the inner man and the devoting to God of the outward man also.

IV.

ON SOME PREVAILING FORMS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AT THIS TIME.

I.

I DO not mean unnecessarily to occupy the reader's attention with the subject of the religious mind in Scotland at the time which I am recalling, or my own relation to it.

That relation was one of sympathy with some elements in it—repulsion from others. I mean the actual feelings that existed and had more or less practical power;—as to which the Westminster Confession of Faith or the Catechisms of the Church would be quite misleading documents, if any proposed to accept them as historical evidence with reference to the first half of this century,—more misleading than they could be as to the second half, in which, indeed, they could not possibly be so used, the silence of the past—which might be ignorantly accepted as acquiescence—having now been succeeded by much questioning and much protest. I shall notice what I was met by at the

close of the first quarter of this century, in so far as doing so may help the reader's understanding of the teaching which I am recalling.

A simple and exclusive trust in Christ as opposed to trust in oneself in any form was insisted on by one class of teachers; and this to the extent of anxiously guarding men against the danger, in ceasing from a trust in good works, of being still self-righteous in the form of a trust in our faith,—what was called "making a Christ of our faith." This *care* I understood when I found this danger common in the mental confusion that ensued when a sense of sin and of the need of mercy preceded any true apprehension of the free Grace of God:—"I do not doubt Christ's power and willingness to save me, I only doubt my own faith; —am I believing as I ought?"

A simple and absolute trust in Christ was taught; so also was the sufficiency of such trust to produce peace with God fully recognised, and the more abundant and the more joyful such peace in believing the greater was felt to be the glory given to Christ. This, assuming that there was no self-deception present. Against such self-deception the felt nearness of death was accepted as a protection: a man who, feeling himself dying, used the language of confidence as well as trust in Christ, was the subject of very special thanksgiving. But even in the full possession of health and with the unclouded prospect of prolonged life, an apprehension of Christ that could

justify joy in dying was admitted to be possible, and, indeed, the purest light and strength for living to the glory of God. ("The joy of the Lord is your strength.") It was, therefore, no new teaching to call on men to rise from the thought of what they were in themselves to the contemplation of free grace revealed in Christ, to believe and rejoice.

But that which was welcomed in the dying and admitted to be, if real, the highest strength for the Christian life, was held to be the happy distinction of a few. Was it not in its nature so related to faith in Christ as to make it a contradiction to say that one and the same faith might in one man be accompanied by it, and in another man be without it? The more I meditated on the secret of the power of faith to give peace in death, or strength for the Christian life, the more I was convinced that there was here a real contradiction, and that the faith which gave peace in death and in life,—the faith which worketh by love, and purifieth the heart and overcometh the world,—had this power simply by reason of what it was in itself, and not because of anything special and individual in some men.

2.

The contradiction of which I am speaking came out very strikingly in that supplement to the teaching of absolute and exclusive trust in Christ which was in the form of a system of *Evidences*.

Though peace with God might not be experienced as the direct effect of faith, still, it was held, the faith might be real and saving, and might be ascertained to be so by its two other, and in some sense secondary, fruits. These other fruits were in themselves doubtless most important, and to others—to all outside—they were the proper evidences of the reality of faith; for they were the elements of the new life—love to God, love to man, all the Christian graces. But the natural—indeed necessary—effect of this teaching on the man himself, who anxiously questioned the reality of his own faith, was to turn the mind in on itself and its own consciousness of goodness, and with a most discouraging result.

In faith the love believed flows into the mind believing in it, with a transforming power; and such transformation may possibly remain even under a temporary eclipse of the light of the love that has wrought it. I can suppose that the man who, in knowing the love of God revealed in Christ, has come himself to love as he is loved, might retain the secret of the excellence and blessedness of love, so as to continue to choose it even were some dark cloud,—a morbid feeling as to himself, or some form even of scepticism as to revealed truth,—to come between him and his God, and to cause him to doubt that the love in which he believed, and by the faith of which the new life of love was quickened in him, embraced him; or even, whether that love had really a living fountain in the

heart of a living God, or was only a mode of feeling which, under some bright illusion, he had seen as the revealed heart of the Father of his spirit, but which he could now no longer refer to such a source. It was beautiful, lovely in itself, and being seen, to be chosen; but as a living love and not an idea,—the love of the living God,—what proof did the idea that had come to his spirit give that it had come from such a fountain?

As to such a suspension of the faith of Divine love,—whether personal or general,—and the possibility of the love it had quickened still living on, I dare say nothing. But the real order is—love believed quickening love, and in continuing to be believed sustaining and increasing love to higher measures; and the artificial suspension of personal trust in Christ, even when that trust has been known, in order to test its reality by the process of examining its fruits, can only be likened to turning off the water which moves the wheel of a mill to see whether the motion generated be the right motion:—that is, in effect, to withdraw the moving power in order to test the character of the motion.

No wonder that the practical result has been inability to find satisfactory fruits of faith,—a dissatisfaction with all that claimed to be fruit of faith which was great in proportion as the self-testing was earnest. On this followed a testimony from without to make up for the lack of the desired inward testi-

mony,—the very complaint of want of fruit being accepted as itself fruit, and the minister hoping favourably of his disciple, and uttering such hope with a confidence proportioned to the self-condemnation with which the man himself pronounced his search for evidence to be fruitless.

An obvious objection to this whole system is that it makes holiness, truth, love, to be desired not for their own sakes, but as evidences of saving faith,—of a faith which secures safety. This is evil; but, besides, it makes the feeling of the want of these elements of the Divine life to be accepted as actual evidence of the existence of that life, and of the faith which quickens it. Surely holiness valued for the sake of safety is not holiness known as itself salvation; and as surely the pain felt in the discovery that I am unholy is not holiness, while the holiness is desired for the sake of safety.

But however clearly all suspension of peace and joy in faith upon the consciousness of the personal faith in Christ as their own Saviour to which men are called is contradictory, and also has the evil results now indicated,—the ultimate root of the whole evil was misconception of the Gospel message itself, and of the faith to which it invites. A grace of God not in itself personal and seen to be personal if seen at all, but which has to be made individual and personal by some act of our own, separating us from the mass of men, would reasonably

concentrate the mind's anxious interest on the act left for it to do as the supply of the needed link. And in connection with such a manifestation of grace the real difficulty becomes the possibility of peace and joy at all in believing. But the faith that Christ only died for some—not all—necessarily made individual joy in the simple faith of His dying love impossible.

V.

"ASSURANCE OF FAITH" AND "UNIVERSALITY OF THE ATONEMENT."

IT was to me a great practical deliverance when I saw the unsoundness of this system of *Evidences*—how it virtually denied the inherent power of a true apprehension of the grace of God to give peace with God, and to quicken that life that is in His favour, and tended to neutralise the effect of all that was so insisted on as to the freeness of that grace; and how it increased the confusion of mind in which the effort to trust simply in Christ is made while the relations of Law and Gospel are not yet understood.

The earnest minds with which I was brought into near contact did, indeed, by their embarrassment, and the difficulty of helping them, confirm my doubts here—as, indeed, the attempt to help them had, in part, suggested them.

I accordingly made the immediate and direct effects of believing the test of the presence of real faith; and so was at liberty to say—when the absence of these

was admitted, and excused on the ground of doubt as to whether the faith of the individual was of the right kind—"It is not that you are not believing in the right way. You are not really believing what you are called to believe; you are not understanding the free grace of God; you are not seeing what is given to you in Christ; and your very anxiety about how you are to believe is hindering you from looking stedfastly at what you are to believe, to see what it is."

In justifying this teaching, I dwelt much on such parables as that of 'The Merchant seeking goodly pearls,' and also on the corresponding fact of the recorded joy of faith in the first Christians. But I also dwelt on the holy power of the peace of faith, and the nature of the Gospel as contemplating the quickening of love by the faith of love—quickening love in sinners by the faith of love as cherished towards sinners, and manifesting itself in forgiveness.

Thus, while seeing so much evil in that erring attempt to protect from false peace, which suspended assured trust in Christ on a consciousness which is properly the fruit of assured trust, I was thankful to put a seal to all that was taught as to an *evangelical repentance*, as distinct from repentance produced by the fear of wrath; and all living illustration of the power of faith working by love to purify the heart and overcome the world, seemed to strengthen my conviction that to bring the human spirit under the

power of the personal sense of redeeming love at once imparts the true peace, and protects effectually, and alone can protect, from false peace. Thus my teaching came to be characterized as preaching *Assurance of Faith*—words sometimes used in the true understanding of what my teaching was, but often, and perhaps more frequently, in a way that, more or less, confounded it with other teachings already associated with this phrase, but really distinguished from mine by important points of difference.

To these I shall afterwards refer, but let me first notice another element in the teaching which I am recalling—I mean the *Universality of the Atonement*, or that the death of Christ for sin was a death for all men, and not for an election from among men.

I had never thought otherwise of the Atonement; and whatever elements of Calvinism I was at that time accepting—and, indeed, continued to accept until a date subsequent to my deposition—I do not remember that I ever read the words, "God so loved the world" . . . . . "He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man," otherwise than in their natural and obvious sense. I remember, at an early stage in my brief ministry at Row, my sense of violent striving for logical consistency, when a very devoted minister —to whom I was much drawn by his zeal for religious awakenings—maintained that, when it is said that God loved the world, it is the elect world that is meant. It was, however, a natural result of my

feeling so strongly the necessity of a personal sense of the love of Christ, in order to an effective action of faith on the human spirit, that I dwelt much on the universality of the Atonement, as warranting me in pressing the Divine love therein manifest on each individual man as love to *him*.

Here I found myself in a large place, where my Calvinistic friends, who most clearly saw the true relation of faith to newness of life, and put most value on assurance of faith in the exceptional cases in which they could allow themselves to think of it as real, were greatly straitened. How were they to harmonise the recognition of a peace and joy in believing which had no foundation and professed none but the simple faith and clear vision of the love revealed in Christ, with a system which, not recognising that love as individual in the revelation itself, left it to be individualised and appropriated by the man himself by some movement of his own mind. A movement of the mind itself faith implies, for such a movement faith is; but not a movement the consciousness of which is any element in the faith, "Christ is my Saviour, He loved me and gave Himself for me." But clearly there was no room in their system for this simple recognition of what Christ is to each man. Hence arose that substitute for an Atonement for all, which took the form of saying that in a certain sense Christ was the gift of God to all; that He belonged to all by a Divine *deed of gift*, such as would be the

giving of a man to a regiment as surgeon to the regiment, in virtue of which gift each individual feeling need of him would freely have recourse to him for his help.

I know how such a shift to escape from a difficulty in the way of our personal appropriation of Christ created by their own system, and which would never have been needed by any in the light of the grace of God which brings salvation to all men,—I know how it will look to those who rather ask, "What need have we of Christ, or of forgiveness through Him?" than "What right has God given us to appropriate Christ to ourselves and trust Him as our own Saviour?"—and some who so feel may read these pages. But, while I could not truly reproduce that past which I am recalling without noticing this nearest approach to the preaching of a free Gospel which met me in combination with Calvinism, I notice this form of thought on this subject because it indicates how much these men—whose system of evidences shewed that they dreaded an unholy and antinomian trust in Christ—at the same time saw how truly personal appropriation of Christ was the great secret of the power of the Gospel to reconcile man to God.

I felt placed, I say, "in a large room," by the faith that Christ died for all, and yet their higher standard of religion caused me to feel more in sympathy practically with the narrower circle of extreme

Calvinists than with the far wider circle of those who believed the universality of the Atonement.

That Christ had tasted death for every man was to my mind the only clear and adequate foundation for that personal peace with God to which in preaching the Gospel I called men. But though this faith gave me this freedom, which I saw illogically drawn from the idea of a deed of gift of Christ to all men, the same faith—in words at least the same—was not giving the same liberty to others—the many others—who, on the subject of the Atonement, repudiated the narrowness of Calvinism. When I urged the necessity of the recognition of the universality of the Atonement truly to justify that free preaching of Christ for the sake of which this idea of a deed of gift was contended for, I knew I was pressing on these zealous men what they seemed to see already all around them, and to see a powerless faith as far as any deep religious feeling was concerned. I could not deny that there was much to excuse them so judging my teaching, while I laboured to shew in the inadequate conceptions of the results of the Atonement which were seen in combination with the recognition of its universality, the explanation of the want of high religious power in that faith.

VI.

FAITH AS UNDERSTOOD BY LUTHER.

I.

THE Law and the Gospel are really harmonious utterances of the mind of God in relation to us, and are in the light of love seen to be so. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" could only be a demand prompted by love, for love alone can value love; and if God did not love, He would not demand love from us. Nay, love in God could alone make His demand on us for love reasonable. If a man should give all his house for love it would be utterly despised. And so in perfect reverence we may say that if God were to give His universe to us, not Himself loving us, and were to ask for love on the ground of this infinite but loveless gift, the demand would be unreasonable, being for an impossibility.

Therefore the Gospel, as the revelation of the love wherewith God loves us, is the necessary supplement and complement to the Law which requires love to God from us; and it might indeed be anticipated—in

essence, if not in its details—by a spirit understanding that God is love, and that in bidding us love He is giving us the law of His own being to be the law of our being. Indeed all these details, being the revelation in Divine action of the love that is in God, might in the perfect light of love have been anticipated, as in that light of love which shines in them they commend themselves to our faith, and by what they are witness to us that they are God manifesting Himself, not in word only but in deed also. This is so, and, in proportion as we see it to be so, our faith is strengthened; and our faith in historical Christianity, known in its historical truth and freed from incrustation of error, identifies itself with our faith in God.

Nevertheless the law and the gospel present themselves in a sort of antagonism in their relation to us as sinners; the law shedding the light of condemnation on what we are, while testifying as to what we ought to be,—the gospel promising deliverance from what we are in a gracious provision for our becoming what we ought to be. So they are not really two streams in respect of which God is shewn to be a fountain yielding both sweet waters and bitter. There is so much in our ignorance of God to permit them so to seem that we—so to speak—would fly from God the Law-giver to God the Saviour. And this movement of ours would not have any evil result if indeed we passed into the light of the Divine Salvation, for we should in that light know the love which bade us

love, in its identity with the love that enables us to love. Nothing, indeed, has to us a more manifest Divine unity than the Divine condemnation and Divine salvation, when, in the full light of the Divine salvation, we see the Divine condemnation and the deep response of our spirits is an amen to both. But that ceasing from self-trust and that trust in God, which is present in this amen, is perfect only when that amen is perfect, and is present even in measure only according as that amen is present in measure. Yet it is present, though but as a grain of mustard seed, when that amen is uttered—however feebly and inarticulately, as in unutterable groanings.

Those of my readers who have read and entered into the light of Luther's Epistle to the Galatians will see, I may venture to say, its essence in what I have just written. Others without that help, or any other form of the same teaching, may have so themselves heard the Gospel in the light of conscience that it has been God saying, "Thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help."

But it is impossible to understand thus the right attitude of the spirit or mind in relation to the law and the gospel without having the fact palpable to us that it is not an attitude of mind to be recognised in ordinary Christianity. On the contrary, in the confusion of thought in which men are contented to remain on the subject of religion, misgivings are productive only of blind attempts at self-help, conscious coming short of

the demands of the law suggesting at the most only more earnest efforts to meet its demands; and God remembered not as God the Saviour, but as God the indulgent Judge, who will not be severe to punish. Would any excusing of spiritual death be the salvation which the quickening with spiritual life alone is?

From time to time this evil has been dealt with in the light and in the strength of the faith of the free grace of God and the saving power which is in that grace alone, as by the Reformers and especially by Luther, who saw man self-destroyed, and so taught self-despair; and saw the help for man that is in God, and so taught justification by faith and by faith alone.

God raised Christ from the dead and gave Him glory that our faith and hope might be in God.

Luther's great work, and the extent to which it has influenced the thought and life of our modern Europe and the world, has naturally raised the question, "What was Luther's work in its essence? For what are we really debtors to him?" Some answer, "he taught us freedom of thought:" some, "he called to a manly hearing and obeying of the voice of conscience:" some, "he vindicated the dignity of the individual man." And every one of these answers has truth in it; but they have truth in them because another answer—and one that goes more to the core of what he was and what the pure light was that shone in him—has to be given,—yet one which many, who, on

the ground of these others—in the application they make of them—hold him in estimation, will, I fear, be slow to recognise as true, or if true not his highest praise; and that is, His faith and hope were in God, and he called men to faith and hope in God. This was his "justification by faith." He put man—the conscious man, in all confused consciousness of good and evil—on the one side, and God as He is revealed in Christ on the other; and he said, "Cease from man—yourself—all self-trust. Trust in God, in His grace towards you. Accept His will for you, and all His provision in Christ for realising it in you. Balance not your felt evil and seeming good in the hope to find the latter more than the former. Neither compare yourself with others to find some comfort in saying, 'I am not worse than they: it may be better.' Turn from what you are, though God may have wrought some good in you, to what God wills you to be; and not only wills you to be—this much the law has told you—but provides for your being; for this is the revelation of the Gospel,—the good news of your salvation."

This was Luther's own strength when he said, "I can do no other, so help me God." He spoke as one keeping a good conscience, but it was in the strength of trust in God. He knew God and the help that righteousness has in the righteous God.

2.

Gambold says, "This is an edge so fine, 'twill turn and warp."*

Luther's demand was for a faith that directly and exclusively contemplated Christ, and had within itself the perfect provision for peace with God, irrespective of anything individual to the believer in Christ; and his protest was against the teaching of the Church of Rome, which demanded a faith perfected by charity. Not that Luther undervalued charity, or believed that a true faith could exist and charity not co-exist with it, but that he saw that to make charity the supplement and complement of faith, and that the consciousness of which was a co-efficient with faith in peace with God, was to misconceive both faith and charity, and their relation to each other. A faith that brought not peace, irrespective of an individual consciousness of charity, was not the faith of the cross of Christ, as Luther knew it. A charity which could be developed in us, not by the power of a faith which gave peace with God, but apart from it, and as its supplement, was not charity as Luther knew it. So he rejected the dogma, and with it all the prescribed discipline by which it was expected to develop the charity which would perfect faith. Dr. Newman has said of *fasting*, "Not that

* The point of this quotation is explained by the context, which speaks of "a faith depending only on the blood of Christ." The quotation is from "The Martrydom of St. Ignatius."

we put fasting in the place of love; but that, by fasting, we seek love." (I quote from memory, and though sure of the meaning, am not of the precise words.) That difficulty of holding to the simplicity of faith, which Luther so realised personally as well as realised as a teacher, is an abiding difficulty, and becomes known to us personally in all our true endeavours to live by faith; while being aware of it, we watch against it.

But, however clearly seen and uncompromisingly denounced by Luther in the form in which it meets us in Romanism, it has reappeared in Protestantism in a form somewhat different, doubtless; but its identity becomes manifest to any one who has true discernment of its working. This result has been greatly facilitated by the obscuration of the true essence and light of Luther's Justification by Faith in the dogmatic teaching of the Reformers. The anxiety to escape from self-trust or self-righteousness, and to secure to Christ the whole glory of man's peace with God in faith, took the form of the doctrine of *imputation of righteousness;* according to which it was not the faith of the revelation of God in Christ which gave peace, but it was the assumed ascription to us of what pleased God in Christ, as if it had been really in us—the place of faith being the *nexus*—the link so connecting us with Christ, as, according to the Divine counsel, securing that God should so see us. To make this assumed escape from self-righteousness

perfect, faith was represented as a mere thread—though a spiritual and divinely-formed thread, doubtless—but, still only a thread on which we were not to fix our attention or think of it as acceptable to God, lest we should so make (as it was expressed) "a Christ of our Faith."

Salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks. To take measures to save one in the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ from self-righteousness is a purpose which could never suggest itself in that light. No flesh shall glory in God's presence, least of all if a man be seeing God in Christ. Nevertheless, as I have said, precautions assuming such a danger have found a place in Protestantism, presenting a striking and instructive parallel to that very departure from the simplicity of faith against which Luther protested. I refer more especially to the system of evidences which were sought in order to assure us of the reality of our faith in Christ. This system does not, indeed, propose to add these evidences which are a moral and spiritual consciousness of the elements of the new life to faith to perfect it, but they—equally with the demand for a perfecting of faith by charity—conjoin a special individual consciousness with faith as entering into our peace in our relation to God; and though the expression "fruits of faith" may seem to preserve the order of cause and effect, and to secure for faith its exclusive character as the link that connects us with

Christ, such seeming soundness is delusive; for a faith that does not give peace by virtue of what it sees and embraces, but has its peace-giving power suspended on fruits, is as far from the faith for which Luther contended as that which suspended the peace-giving power of faith on its having charity conjoined with it.

No doubt this system of evidences does not hinder those who adopt it from the admission of a possible peace and joy in believing apart from the discovery of evidences, as in the case of death-beds distinguished by a triumphant joy in Christ taking all sting out of death; for such joy is not retrospective, nor—so to speak—introspective, finding oil for its bright shining in any self-consciousness, but is the utterance always of the full realisation of redeeming love—a joy in Christ. And that it is what it says it is, and yet is perfectly safe and sound Christian joy in God—and that in transcendent measure—is gladly acknowledged by those who value most the system of evidences. Nor is the breathing of so free an atmosphere of faith held to be possible in death alone. In health and strength, with no suggestion of a near passing into the invisible, men may, without question, express the very same freedom of faith and joy in God through Christ which gives such a holy interest to some death-beds; and when they have done so, it has been the utterance of a present faith in the love of God equally simple.

But all such joy in God through Christ we may think of as having its probable counterpart in the beatific vision for which the Roman system finds a place; at all events, such special experiences are marked off as distinct from *ordinary Christian experiences*. *There* the comfortable hope of faith is sought to be reached by the addition of evidences, to what, it is hoped, is faith; just as the ordinary Romanist seeks to add charity to his faith, and to be at peace.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI.

I.

LUTHER'S faith in the universality of the Atonement gave him a freedom in preaching Christ which those have not had who in Scotland have approached nearest to him, both in his demand for an exclusive trust in Christ, and in his vindicating for Christ the glory of being the ground and source of perfect peace with God to those who trust in Him.

Those among us who in this view have been nearest to him have, as to the extent of the Atonement, agreed not with him but with Calvin. Not that they did not in many cases feel their Calvinism a bondage, as appears from the attempt to reach the freedom which the truth would have given them by the idea of Christ being given to all men by a *deed of gift*,—constituted a Saviour for all men, as the surgeon of a

regiment is their surgeon to all the men in the regiment, whether they employ him or not.

But they were still Calvinists; and when Arminianism was the prevailing faith of the Church of Scotland, their seeming approach to a larger view on the subject of the Atonement gained them no favour. On the contrary, the most prominent among them incurred the censure of the General Assembly in connection with a book called "The Marrow of Modern Divinity." This was in 1720. At the time to which I am now going back—1825 to 1831—I do not know that any stood exactly on the same ground.

2.

To Luther the great interest of existence was man's relation to God. His controversy with Romanism was that it was misleading men in that relation. What he believed himself to have learned, and to be set to teach, was the secret of occupying that relation aright. And he had to do with a generation which also felt that man's relation to God was the most important aspect of existence, including eternity in one view with time, subordinating time to eternity;—a generation, therefore, which valued and honoured the Church and trembled at her voice, listening in solemn awe to all she taught on the subject of the favour of God, and proportionately startled and made to wonder when one arose who questioned the Church's teaching,—even denounced it as misleading

and soul-destroying; one whose appeals to conscience and to the Scriptures, in justification of his startling denunciation, were too powerful and authoritative with the inherent authority of truth to be contemned; while his denunciation of the teaching which was causing to err was accompanied by teaching in which he declared truly the way of life, and indeed preached peace by Jesus Christ.

Now, however, there are those who do not enter into the divine interest of that which was Luther's true controversy. In their case the living God and what He feels towards them and how they are called to feel to Him,—all this is a subject of thought which has been emptied of its interest, either by conscious unbelief or by absorption in what seem practical questions,—questions which belong to the really tangible and practical interest of man's relation to man. Such persons cannot easily understand Luther and his time, and may readily lower him and his work, looking at them in relation to the objects to which they are themselves devoted, as social and political reformers,—to whom any ray of light shed on what is due from man to man, or on man's claims on man, has more value than any measure of light shed on man's relation to God.

VII.

ESSENCE OF THE TEACHING NOW RECALLED.

1.

DOUBTLESS man's relation to God and the relation of time to eternity are the aspects of man, and of the condition of his being, which give its proper interest to such a book as I am now writing; for they were the interest of the teaching which I am endeavouring to recall, not without hope of engaging profitably the attention of my readers. And the past coming anew before me as a living dealing of a man with men, related to each other as teacher and taught, the whole which I recall comes before me in the light of that love of God to man which to my faith was over my people and myself, as the glorious firmament is at this moment to my bodily vision over the scene of my early ministerial labours. In that light of the Divine love, man's relation to God was seen as almost the whole of man. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thine heart, and mind, and soul, and strength," was felt as the utterance of that Divine love, claiming the whole man. And "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's," was the same voice of the Divine love repeating as the Gospel its utterance as the Law, and now declaring what God wills man to be in connection with what God has done in Christ that man might be it. Yet this light,—which as the Law claimed the whole man for God, and as the Gospel revealed the Divine provision in Christ for the full meeting of that Divine claim,—was light in which not only man's claim on man, but also the provision in Christ for the full meeting of that human claim was seen in all its authority and all its beauty; —the commandment to love our brother man being the corollary to the commandment to love God our Father, and the strength for obeying it being known in that faith of the death of Christ for man which reveals the life of brotherhood in the life of sonship, and reconciles us to each other in reconciling us to God. The times and scenes and teaching which I am now recalling come back to me in this light, as they were lived in this light, and I must speak of that of which I speak as seen in this light.

Proceeding to do so, the thought painfully suggests itself, "How many of your readers will be unprepared to see with you in that light of man's relation to God and man's relation to man, in which the true value of

what you hope to write can alone be seen? Out of that light, and still more in the darkness which is more than its absence—is indeed its negation—what you represented to your people as the all-important aspect of existence will have no such character." But the truth of things is not changed from what it was in Luther's days,—what it had been in the days of St. Paul, whose spiritual successor as a preacher of Christ Luther felt himself specially to be. I know that time is accepted by many as, I may say, man's eternity; that man's relation to man is accepted as his one social living relation, to be occupied in the light of man's own thinking concerning it, with no recognition of light from God, clothed with His authority. This, as the description of one portion of the audience to which a preacher of Christ in this day addresses himself, suggests a discouraging contrast with the mind of Christendom at the Reformation, or even with the mind of man—Jew and Gentile—as it was when Christ was first preached. Yet it is also to be said of this time, and indeed of this very day, as compared with that past which I am recalling, that occupation of mind with Religion is more widely spread; though so much of it is, so to speak, an adverse interest, and though the question, "How am I to be at peace with God?" is in so many minds become the question, "Is there a God whose peace I ought to seek?" Even men speaking such things may be helped to a solution of their doubt—an

answer of their question—by any true words concerning the God that is, and the secret of peace with Him; and as such I trust to commend what I now recall to every reader's conscience in the sight of God. This hope is not forbidden to me even as to these extreme cases.

But the wide circle of interest in religion is still a favourable interest, inasmuch as it acknowledges the primary importance of man's relation to God,—the knowledge of the secret of a true peace with God as the pearl of great price. I think a large circle will agree with me in my conception of Luther and his work, and as to his claim to a peculiar place in our thoughts and in our hearts. And though my first understanding of the true relation of works to faith, and of the life that is in His favour to peace with God, was not received through Luther, or any teaching but that of the New Testament, I always remember the bright shining of the light of the Gospel which there was to me in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians,—an experience renewed many years afterwards, when my reading on the subject of the Atonement led me to re-peruse it with care as well as with intense pleasure.

2.

Seeing my people in the light of the Divine Love, my one endeavour necessarily was to help them to see themselves in that same light. In attempting

this, the chief difficulty with which I had to contend, after a real and earnest interest was once awakened, was connected with the freeness of the grace of God which the Gospel revealed. He who had in free grace originally given us a being would—it might be thought—be readily understood to be now in free grace saving us from sin—the perversion of that being. But I did not find it so. Sin which had brought the need of salvation seemed to have brought an incapacity for understanding that pure love which commends itself in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. This love was His whose ways are not as our ways nor His thoughts as ours; and that partial light which was received to the effect of quickening conscience, and revealing the righteous authority of the law of God, at first worked in much remaining darkness; so that its first effect was to make the faith of the Divine mercy only more difficult than it had previously seemed to be. Not that the *true* mercy of God, which is holy and seeks to make us holy, is ever really understood while the sinfulness of sin is not yet known; but, in the vagueness of thought and feeling on the subject of our relation to God which is so usual, men seem to themselves to have a hope and trust in God's mercy,—which yet fails them and vanishes when an awakened sense of sin makes the real need of mercy to be felt.

In point of fact, of the twofold teaching addressed to them, in the endeavour to illustrate the law and the

gospel, the first part seemed to be more easily understood than the second; and men seemed to be quicker in coming to know themselves as sinners than in coming to know Christ as a Saviour. It has been already explained* how faith thus came to be a *third commandment*, as it were, instead of the secret of the response to the other two.

It must be understood that the essence of that which was insisted on in this teaching was the direct and immediate relation of peace with God to faith,—not the *measure* of peace and joy in believing which might be attained. *That* would be according to the measure of faith. But the assumption that the faith was real and without misgiving, while there flowed not from it peace with God through Christ, was the conception which was rejected:—in other words, the liberty to say, "I do not doubt Christ, I only doubt myself."

Of course the case would have been altogether different if any were to say, "I do not see in Christ enough to trust to." But this was not the ground taken. Though, doubtless, it was the fact; for if enough were really seen in Christ to justify the trust called for, that trust would have been put in Him and its necessary accompaniment of peace with God enjoyed.

It is only in the light of the love of God to sinners revealed in Christ, and under the power of that Divine

* See Chapter II., p. 133.

love that it is possible to realise the feeling with which—in the teaching which I am recalling—I was constrained to urge on my hearers that *that* was not the faith of the Gospel which did not bring peace and joy in believing. I used to say, "If you knew the mind of God towards you as the Gospel reveals it,—if you only knew about yourselves what in the light of the Gospel I know about you—knew as really your own the unsearchable riches which you have in Christ,—you must needs rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I only ask you to know what now is. I only labour to undeceive you in thinking that though it does not give you peace you know it already. If your words could be true, then indeed your case would be hopeless. If you knew all that is to be known, and yet knew not enough for your peace, then whence could peace ever come to you?"

I hope the difference between this teaching and a demand for confidence, for assurance—as if faith were made saving by becoming assured—is sufficiently palpable. Nothing is more deceptive than an effort to keep up a feeling of assurance; while nothing is more a movement in light than our yielding our spirit to the peace-giving power of the love revealed—freely cherishing love towards God in the measure, and just in the measure, in which that revealed love is realised. This latter was my teaching.

The distinction which I seek to mark may be made clearer by some notice of other forms of religious

peace with which what I taught was often identified, but which rested on other grounds than the truth revealed,—and concerning which it may be noticed that those who held these forms of assurance could not say to any doubting, discouraged brother, "If you knew as to yourself and the mind of God towards you what I know as to you, you would have peace."

I am not to attempt here anything exhaustive.

I think that the most marked of these forms of personal confidence as to our relation to God (to which I refer), are these three:—

(1.) That met in the extremest Calvinists, who demand the assurance that a man's sins are forgiven and the man accepted in Christ as the immediate act of faith—a demand justified, not because of that which is a revealed fact as to all, but because power to believe it is only given to the elect, as to whom it is true.

As I write these words, I feel the difficulty which those to whom this form of faith is new are likely to have as to its possibility. But it does exist. Assurance is thus made its own foundation, because the being able so to believe is held to be evidence, that he who is so enabled to believe is one as to whom it is true.

(2.) Quite distinct from this is the assurance—more or less pronounced—which meets us in combination with Arminianism, where peace with God has always a personal history and rests on a personal transaction,

—on forgiveness of God granted to the individual man: as to which the cry for it and the answer to that cry are held to be known, and to separate between the individual and the mass of men. So that the man is not rejoicing in what was the mind of God towards him before he knew it, nor can he say to a brother man seeking peace with God, "If you knew the mind of God towards yourself as I know it as to you, you would have peace."

(3.) A third form of confidence, distinct from both these, rests on the consciousness of believing in Christ and laying hold of the promise of forgiveness and Divine acceptance made to faith. I am not here considering this form of religious peace, farther than to place it also in contrast with the peace which springs *directly* from the revelation of God in Christ. Bring it to the test of the thoughts with which the man who has peace contemplates others who share not this peace. He cannot say to them, "If you knew about yourself, and the feelings with which God is regarding you, what I know as to you, you would have peace; for the mind of God towards you which is revealed in Christ is the same, which, in its relation to myself, has given me peace."

The first of these forms of assurance is met in connection with an extreme recognition of Divine Sovereignty, in what is so far one with Calvinism, but is held as more self-consistent than Calvinism, inasmuch as the Calvinism which recognises the chief end

of man to be to glorify God and to enjoy Him, and then recognises decrees of election and reprobation, is regarded as a contradiction. In this view the latter idea is accepted and the former, as incompatible with the latter, is rejected. The second form is met in connection with Arminianism; the last in connection with what claims to be specially entitled to be received as Evangelicism — whether more or less Calvinistic.

3.

These three forms of peace differ from each other in respect of that by which in each a man individualises himself:—by the conscious history of a conversion, and mercy sought and mercy granted; or by the consciousness of trusting in a promise made to faith in Christ; or by the consciousness of a direct faith in forgiveness, held to be possible only to the elect, with a special form of faith in election. But this is common to them all,—that the confidence towards God which is possessed is not a confidence quickened by simple believing apprehension of the grace revealed.

At the time which I am recalling, the religious thought on this subject with which I was most brought into contact was of course that of the section of the church in which I found myself. In a general view it may be said that the prevailing creed was Arminian, while there was a large minority of Calvinists to whom Calvinism was in various measures

a living faith. Any doctrine on the subject of trust in Christ which approached what is suggested by the expression *assurance of faith* was to be met with in this minority. But my early habits of thought had been formed in intercourse with that larger portion of the Church who regarded the language of assurance with distrust, fearing self-deception, and, indeed, associating such language with fanaticism.

In my endeavour to bring my people into the light of the Gospel, and to deliver them from the bondage into which the law of God, not seen in the light of the Gospel, was bringing earnest minds still in this broken light, I found myself gradually more and more attracted to the side on which the demand for faith was the prominent teaching—faith as opposed to works in that controversy, the opposite parties in which seemed to themselves, severally, to side with St. Paul or St. James; or at least the one party to read St. James by the light of St. Paul,—the other to read St. Paul by the light of St. James.

VIII.

REASONS FOR NOT JOINING A PARTY.

1.

MORE than one consideration determined me from the first of my ministry in the Church of Scotland not to attach myself to either of the two parties into which the Church was divided. I was, indeed, chiefly influenced by fearing that the fetters of party might interfere with free obedience to light; but, also, in part, because the men of each party seemed to me doing injustice to what good was in the other, and to see its evil through a magnifying party-feeling. Their watchwords, severally, were "Faith" and "Works;" but the former watchword did not imply any real Antinomianism, neither did the latter imply any rejection of the Atonement as the ultimate ground of man's acceptance with God.

When ministerial intercourse with my people in the light of the love of God to man brought me into a near acquaintance with the confidence of men on the subject of their relation to God, in which so many are

contented to live (and which, at the first, any awakening of mind to the importance of that relation only revealed without removing), two convictions gradually gathered strength in me, and soon established me in my isolation, viz.:—1st, That the contention for faith was combined with much inadequacy in the apprehension of the revealed object of faith; and 2nd, That the contention for works was connected with a very great shortcoming in the conception of the practical demand which the Gospel makes on us. In short, the demand for faith was made in connection with the preaching of an atonement limited to the elect; and the demand for practical conformity to Christ as our example was made in connection with a superficial morality which was not the worship of the Father in the fellowship of the life of the Divine Son, nor was it a brotherhood of man and man, in the fellowship of Christ the true Brother's brotherhood with us all. So, while claiming to make Christ our example, it contemplated no real conformity to His life, no participation in that because of which the testimony was borne to Him, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" and the call to us added "hear ye Him."

To those who have not been disciplined to it, the attempt to combine a free Gospel with a limited Atonement will always appear unnatural and full of practical difficulty. Yet this combination has been effected without seeming misgiving, by many Cal-

vinists whose personal religion has been of the highest type, and who have been much honoured as members of Christ and preachers of His Gospel. The command to preach the Gospel to every creature has so far practically neutralised the faith that He died only for some; and this command, as it was felt an authority justifying the preacher, was also urged on the hearer to encourage the personal trust to which he was invited.

NOTE.

However affected by their views of the Atonement, I found in some Calvinists a higher standard both of faith and of the fruits of faith; and I have ever looked back with thankfulness on the intimate acquaintance which, in the beginning of my ministry, I made with such biographies as those of David Brainerd, Henry Martyn and H. Dorney.

2.

The constant realisation of the love of God to them determined the character of all my dealings with my people as their minister. That love was a light full of practical guidance. It kept before me the end which the Gospel contemplated, and made clear the fitness of the pure and simple faith of the Gospel to

accomplish that end; so that I had no misgivings in inviting to the fullest peace and joy in believing, having confidence in the moral and spiritual power of the truth to be believed. My only care, therefore, was to present clearly the message of free grace with which I felt myself put in trust, and to fix attention on it. "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" was my mental answer when guards and cautions were suggested because of the risk of a false peace. Once* President Edwards' book on *The Religious Affections* was in this way put into my hands by the care of a valued friend, and, both for his sake who gave it to me, and in deference to the Christian experience of the man to whom we owe the Life of David Brainerd (to whom in another sense Brainerd may have felt that he owed his life), I read and weighed both the reasons for caution and the suggestions for practical guidance to ministers;—but with the result of strengthening my conviction that the light of the Gospel must be its own protection,—that the minister's one care should be that the apprehension of Christ which gives peace is a true apprehension, that the peace possessed is really peace produced by the light of the glory of God in the face

* January 1st, 1827. It has been already mentioned (see Introductory Narrative, page 5) that this book was given to him by his college friend, William Penney. Since the earlier sheets of this book were printed, he, too, has been taken.

of Jesus Christ. Not that Edwards' care to guard against a false peace was not fully justified by the experience and observation which moved him to write. This I quite felt. But it seemed to me clear that in none of the cases which he details was it at all the revelation of God in Christ that had given the peace which the absence of fruits of faith had subsequently proved to have been a false peace; but, on the contrary, it was something individual, received as an intimation to the individual. It was not a coming into the light of the common salvation. I could therefore profit by what was warning in this book, and be made more jealous by it, without giving place to any distrust as to the safety of the teaching which to my friend had seemed dangerous: while the safeguards suggested by President Edwards were so impressed with tokens of the natural and necessary working of that extremest Calvinism which he had so fully accepted, that his having recourse to them only made manifest the shortcoming of his creed, by reason of which it left room for such self-deception, in the effort to make that mercy personal and individual which was not revealed as such.

This book was indeed—in the form of the experience of a mind of a higher order, and possessed by a high standard of religion in dealing with the subjects of his own awakening ministry—only the ordinary system of evidences with which Calvinists

supplement their preaching of the Gospel, according to their conception of what it is to make our calling and election sure. That system I may revert to afterwards. I only notice here that that increasing freedom, which a fuller apprehension of the free grace of God, and the manner of salvation which is by faith and not by works, was imparting to my preaching of Christ, was only confirmed by the careful considering of objections to such teaching;—objections made by some in distrust of anything that the words Assurance of Faith suggested; while others would not object to the most confident expressions of peace and joy in believing, if they could regard such peace and joy as the fruit of a pure and simple trust in Christ;—as in the language of the dying, in whose case the felt nearness of death was supposed to be some protection from self-deception; or even in exceptional cases of the higher type of religious life. Either as always dangerous and akin to fanaticism, or only very exceptionally safe, that "beginning of confidence" and immediate quickening of the life of sonship, which to me was the natural effect of faith in Christ, was regarded with distrust. Yet that distrust always expressed itself in a way that showed that that which was distrusted was so only because it was not understood.

I found much to strengthen my confidence in the reasonableness of my expectation that peace and joy

in believing would spring from true faith safely, as well as naturally, in such parables as the finding of the pearl of great price, &c. (Note Gambold, with Mr. Erskine's introduction.*) But it was the discernment that faith worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world, as a law of the kingdom of God, which I always fell back upon.

* The reference is to the edition of Gambold's Works, with an Introductory Essay by Thomas Erskine, which was published at Glasgow by Chalmers & Collins in 1822.

IX.

SALVATION BY FAITH.

I.

AT the very threshold, and, as I may say, in the entrance to even the outer court of the temple, the necessity of preserving the divine order in teaching Salvation by Faith was felt. Men awaking for the first time to the importance of religion, or hitherto meeting any demand for religion to which they were conscious by an aggregate of good works and good dispositions—with such response to the demand for repentance and faith as is the usual fruit of conscious shortcoming, and of the traditional habit of thinking of Christ as the Saviour—need, above all things, to be brought to understand their actual ignorance of all that they seem to themselves to know, however they may admit that they do not live up to their knowledge.

The forgiveness that is with God that He may be feared is not thus seen in its relation to fearing God —is not known as that which, being known and

tested, quickens in us that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. And so the anxiety felt is as to what must precede this forgiveness—some form of fear of God which is to lead to forgiveness, not to be justified by it. And the blind endeavour to attain to this pre-requisite to forgiveness absorbs the mind, with the result of preventing any entrance in of the light of that divine forgiveness which, once understood, reveals the vanity and the emptiness of the preparation for mercy ignorantly sought, as well as its superfluousness were it a possible reality; and by virtue of what it is, and the elements of the name of God which are in it, as given in Christ, it enables us to believe in it and rejoice in it freely—introducing to that peace with God, for the sake of which forgiveness was desired, and to infinitely more than in the unaided endeavour to procure forgiveness had been at all conceived of.

The value put on the forgiveness of God before it is yet known is, indeed, no small thing, being rest for the spirit in our relation to God as the righteous Judge of man, and an Almighty Sovereign; and that the forgiveness that is revealed in the Gospel imparts this peace is a true element in its value; and that the anxious self-condemned spirit that earnestly craved for it, having found it gives thanks for it, is no utterance of a blame-worthy interest in our own well-being. Nevertheless, it is the least spiritual element in the preciousness of the pearl of great price, and even it

could not be held with an intelligent assurance were it not known in combination with the other elements.

2.

I have said that the law demanding love, when seen in the light of love, is seen to be the utterance of love —what could proceed from love only. But, until the light of the Gospel is shed forth on the law, what it demands from us, and not what moves God to make the demand, naturally engrosses the attention of minds awakening to the consciousness of alienation from God. *Then* the love of the Creator is known in the truth of what it is, seen as the love of the Redeemer.

Therefore is it of such importance to take men at once into the light of the Gospel, and to engage their minds with the love of God as revealed in relation to men as sinners. In the peace-giving light of redeeming love we are able to look upwards to God and in on ourselves, and accept the vision as truth in all it includes, suffering it to mould us and renew us, according to the Divine purpose for which it is given.

What first comes to us in this way is the discovery that the first movements of our being, which a broken light of the law acting on our fears has prompted, have been blind efforts at what that light only showed to be desirable but could not make us to reach. Thus in the light of the forgiveness revealed in Christ we see the vanity of the attempt to win or deserve it,

—the necessity of its being free or not at all; in the consciousness of a true turning of the heart to God, in love to Him who first loved us, we see the unsoundness of that effort at repentance which we made while repentance was sought as a condition of forgiveness,—the root-motive being the wish to be forgiven. Above all, in the free and joyful and unshaken trust in Christ which is quickened in us in the light of what He is to us by the grace of God, the blind effort to make Christ ours by trusting Him—which we hoped was faith though it brought no peace or joy—is seen exposed to us. The truth of forgiveness, of repentance, of faith, being thus known, these as known have another and higher value than that which they had while earnest and anxious but blind efforts were made to reach them. These efforts were prompted by the sense of danger and desire of safety; but, now known, they are found to be the introduction to eternal life. There was not formerly—at the time which I am recalling—the same feeling about the desire of safety, of escape from hell, which so many now express. That the interest of religion as the means of escape from future misery or of securing future happiness has nothing holy or spiritual in it is certain. It is but the instinct of self-interest deferred to a remote future, and cannot be placed higher than the same interest in its relation to present and earthly things. But it is not therefore to be confounded with that self-seeking which is sin,—nor is the attempt to suppress it to be

exalted to the dignity of self-sacrifice. Let it be kept in its own place, and let not religious earnestness which has no better root than the instinct of self-preservation pass for that which it is not.

But, however we may have our eyes opened to see that this is so, the cry for safety must be met, and the anxieties which pertain to it must be removed, before the field is open for the appearance on it of higher influences. This preliminary work is accomplished when [we come to know] the forgiveness that is with God that He may be feared, and the forgiveness which thus stills the cry for safety by satisfying it—stills it in the embrace of the forgiving love of God bringing us back to Himself—then reveals its own higher value, the attraction of which is addressed to our highest nature, as we are God's offspring. The Father of our spirits is, I may say, hid from us in the righteous God against whom we have sinned, while, in ignorance of the forgiveness revealed in Christ, a sense of danger and fear of the wrath to come is moving us to attempt, we know not how, to move God to have mercy upon us. But the righteous Judge loses His terrors to us—though in a way that makes His righteousness more effulgent—when our higher relation to Him is made known, and the eternal Son gives us to know in our righteous Judge the eternal Father. The faith of the free grace of our God—with all the elements of holiness and righteousness and truth, as well as mercy, which

make the perfect light of the Divine love—does indeed entirely change our whole mind on the subject of our relation to God,—making that relation the first and central interest of existence because of the elements of well-being which it contains within itself.

Safety in God's universe is felt, but it is now scarcely thought of, because the Father's heart in which we are trusting is so full a fountain of other and richer blessing that this, our cry before, is scarcely thought of. And while safety sinks down to its proper level, new desires and hopes take possession of our hearts, set free for them by the remission of sins,—the desires and hopes which pertain to eternal life, now known in the truth of what it is—the knowledge of God the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ. For this great change includes peace, doubtless, as to all that had formerly distressed us in the thoughts of God, according to the words "He that believeth shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." But that which fills the consciousness and is the joy of the Lord in us, is that we have passed from death unto life: that we shall not come into condemnation is rather known in the change than inferred from it even as a promise.

We do not in this light of life indulge in hard thoughts of those who yet know no higher religion than the fear of hell and the hope of heaven. Nor do we attempt to set them free by telling them that their religion is a form of selfishness. We know that

we ourselves have been raised to the higher level on which we now find ourselves, not by the becoming indifferent to our own well-being, but by coming to know our true well-being as given to us, not won by us,—given in Christ. To be blessed in the life of love quickened in us by the faith of God's love—this and this alone is our true deliverance from the life of self. If we seem to attain this deliverance otherwise—by simply endeavouring to get above our interest in self by a resolution and an effort—we either deceive ourselves and mistake the effort for success, or we escape self-deception at the price of a despairing consciousness of failure.

NOTE.—The reader has now before him all that my father accomplished in the way of explanation of his thought and teaching at Row. These chapters were written in July of last year (1871); and, although the work was resumed in October, he did not continue what he had already written; but, making a fresh beginning, he wrote those chapters which form the bulk of Part I. The "Reflections" contained in Part III. were intended to belong to the introductory part of the book, but it has been thought best to give them separately, both because they are of the nature of digressions and because, if embodied in Part I., they would have unduly increased its bulk.

PART III.

REFLECTIONS ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

I.

FAITH AND DOUBT.

1.

IN the attempt to come truly and sympathisingly under the burden of the earnest thinkers of another generation, there is necessarily much difficulty. In that past, to which I am now going back, a young clergyman who entered on his ministry, accepting in unquestioning faith that conception of the purpose of God in man of which I have spoken, and receiving the Bible as in relation to that purpose a divine revelation, would be admitted to be entering on the right path—that lying open before him, and in entering on which he would be exercising the utmost amount of rational religious liberty, and obeying also the highest claim of the ministerial calling. Were not all questions as to life and duty embraced in that of the great end of man's being, and to be studied in the light shed on them by Revelation?

The first thought that arises in looking back from amid the questioning of this time to the time I am

now recalling is—Would that earnest young ministers now were spared the ordeal of these questionings, and found the path of ministerial labour open and unembarrassed as it looked to me when I entered on it! But this would be a hasty thought. This time has been chosen for them—they have not made it what it is. What they are called to is to bear themselves rightly in it. So doing, it will yield to them the good that is in it for them, which will be great in proportion as the difficulty with which they have to contend is great.

But, what is it to bear themselves rightly in this time?

To ignore altogether the questioning that is around us—this would be to refuse to see any divine purpose in reference to ourselves in it, or any good in this form of the trial of our faith. But we cannot do so, or doubt that the trial of our faith is precious, whatever be its form.

On the other hand, we must not forget that trials of faith are not justifications of doubt. Be they what they may—painful events, perplexing aspects of life, or reasonings and questionings of other minds, or springing up in our own minds—the utmost extent of their reasonable demand is for a reason of the hope that is in us. They never can, so to speak, require the uprooting of the hope that is in us, even for a moment, or as if the permission to plant it again, after we had satisfied the doubt suggested, were all that we could reasonably claim.

This, indeed, seems insisted on when all fundamental questions are required to be treated as really open questions; as if we were bound by the suggestion of a doubt to take the mental attitude of doubt, and as if to do otherwise were to beg the question. What is thus asked for is simply *impossible*. A man is entitled to ask why I believe, and to canvass freely my ground of faith. But I may not—and being in light I cannot—go further to meet him. I cannot make myself even for a moment share his doubt. I can only do my best to understand it and to weigh it. More would be to step into his darkness and suspend faith, instead of accepting that darkness as a trial of faith, certain to be dissolved in the light of true faith.

But, although a man in the light of truth (however small the measure of that light in his consciousness) cannot really for argument's sake, or for a false show of reasonableness, so to speak, make himself uncertain, and must feel that the attempt would be disloyalty to truth—he may, and he ought, according to what capacity of so doing he may have, to esteem it a sacred part of what he owes to other men to endeavour fairly to weigh these questionings of his faith, coming under their burden.

And in proportion as a man is really in light will this practical tenderness to the doubts and difficulties of others be easy; and, so to speak, natural to him. I have seen it urged that we ought to be charitable to others because of our own uncertainty. A most

serious error lurks in this thought. No doubt, a fair-minded man, conscious of uncertainty, would feel his conscience smiting him—would feel himself, in fact, a false man—in being intolerant to others, taking their views to the bar of his own views which, in his inmost soul, he knew might possibly not be the truth. This I feel, while alas! it is also too plain, as a matter of fact, that the toleration which we might expect on this ground we do not usually meet with. On the contrary, intolerance is not only what can co-exist with secret misgivings, but is often produced by such misgivings; and the eagerness with which men labour to shew their opponents to be in the wrong, and their anxiety to proselytise is, at its root, a craving for the strengthening and confirming of their own position by the reflex effect of succeeding in persuading others.

Not uncertainty but the certainty which belongs to true light is the real fountain of toleration. In whatever measure this certainty is enjoyed, a man is saved from the temptation to seek confirmation of his own conclusions in the assent of others, to which I have referred. But what most powerfully operates to save him from intolerance is the conscious history of what true light, be it more or less, he has himself attained. He knows how slowly and gradually he has come to know and accept truth as what has its light in itself; how difficult he has found it to disentangle the perceptions which have had a claim to this character from opinions commended to him on what he has

come to see were superficial and extrinsic considerations,—traditional creeds, or new forms of thought, fresh and with a show of discovery. The history of his knowing what he knows teaches him patience and toleration: his consciousness of remaining ignorance teaches him this also. How much of all he holds and must practically act on, is in the region of questions which, he must confess to himself, have two sides;—questions all the bearings of which he does not see, although he must proceed on what, on the whole, seems probably right and wise!

But what most teaches charity in that highest region with which the question of charity most connects itself—viz., Religion, is the realisation of the divine charity, the divine patience, the divine bearing with error, the divine giving of line upon line; God not demanding light but imparting it as He finds men can receive it. With Him is no darkness at all; yet who so bears with man's darkness? And how important a part of our function as working His work, fellow-workers with Christ to the glory of the Father, consists in bearing with the darkness of others in true fellowship with His long-suffering patience! If we know God as teaching men, if we have ourselves the experience of being taught of Him, we are in the way of attaining to that true charity to the errors of others, which is but one form indeed of true love to them.

I say the true fountain of charity is conscious pos-

session of light, not the consciousness of darkness, and yet would that that consciousness of darkness yielded all the charity it should.

2.

The consciousness of being in light is the true fountain of right feeling towards others still in darkness. But while it precludes impatience and high-handed intolerance, and secures due tenderness in dealing with doubt, it also secures the proper firmness, and saves from that false indulgence to doubt which would be due only if the most fundamental questions which exercise men were ever open questions, and to begin with doubt were a sacred duty.

It would be indeed a false charity to our brother which would proceed on the imputation of unreasonableness, nay, unrighteousness to our Father, even God. If faith is reasonable, and the demand for it on God's part a reasonable demand, then to show our brother the unreasonableness of his doubt must be what we owe him, and the practical form which our love to him will take. To encourage him to value himself on his doubt will be to do to him the greatest injury we possibly can.

Only let us be sure that we really reverence his reason, and do not trample upon it in putting down his doubt. We feel that nothing can be more objectionable than the attempt to put down questionings by an arbitrary exercise of authority, or a demand for

faith on any other ground than that on which God invites it. But this error we shall be saved from, if, simply as ourselves listening to and believing that witness for God without which He has never left Himself, we only invite others to listen and hear and believe, according to that right to be believed which is ever recognised in the voice of that witness when heard. That what God is speaking to man's spirit in spirit and in truth men have repeated not in spirit and in truth, but as a dogma once enshrined in a system of thought, and then handed down traditionally from generation to generation:—this is no reason for regarding it lightly, or lowering it to the level of a mere traditional dogma *if God is speaking it to each human spirit still.* If He is speaking it now to us individually, and that we know that He is because ourselves hearing Him, we must be allowed to hold the response of faith to be reasonable, and the withholding of that response unreasonable. In this view, to hold unbelief reasonable is to hold belief unreasonable.

As we cannot hesitate as to our own response of faith, we cannot be uncertain as to the obligation of another human spirit, hearing as we hear, to give the same response of faith. As true to this light we feel that what is due from us to others is, first, the clear utterance by word and deed of our own response of faith; and then, the helping others to disentangle themselves from the perplexing confusions which abound on the subject of truth and faith, and to

recognise God's own claim to be Himself heard and listened to in faith,—to be alone with God and recognise His own utterance in them of His claim on their faith, and to hear what He speaks to them.

But though we know that our own faith is but the due response to a voice that speaks to others, as it does to us, we know that in us and in them it is but one of many voices; and though, being heard, its claim to speak with authority is at once recognised, and though the faintest hearing of it brings the feeling that it ought to be listened to,—yet, in point of fact, other voices are more listened to, and it is disregarded with greater or less measures of blameworthiness of which we may not judge, but with evil results from which there is no true salvation but in being induced to listen and hear and obey.

I say we are not to sit in judgment on the degrees of blameworthiness which attach to men not hearing God; but the whole process of coming to hear is ever accompanied by a measure of self-blame for having been slow to hear, and our testimony from without must be one with the testimony of conscience within: we cannot offer our brother the deceitful comfort of giving him credit for doubts which in the sight of God his own heart condemns; and, truly, we shall have no temptation to do so if we realise the soothing, encouraging, forgiving love that is in the divine will which at once blames unbelief and invites faith.

Coming back to the starting-point of ministerial

labour of which I am speaking, as to the claims of so many questions now subjects of discussion to be previous questions, demanding solution before it can be assumed that the chief end of man is to glorify God, and that the Scriptures are a divine revelation given in relation to this the great end of our being,—are the questions to which I refer really to be accepted as previous questions? In form they doubtless are; but are they so in reality? that is, are these questions which must be first taken up and disposed of *before* this starting-point can reasonably be accepted? I believe they are not, because without having ever taken them up we may know in a clear and absolute light of truth that the chief end of our being is to glorify God and to enjoy Him, and, I may add, we may know with certainty the Scriptures as a revelation given to us by God in relation to this end of our being.

In the light in which this is known the questions to which I refer are implicitly answered, though they have never been raised. Therefore when raised they will in this light be at once answered, and whatever show of reason has caused them to be entertained as open questions will be fairly dealt with, and whatever departure from right reason or going out of the legitimate ground of human thought there has been connected with the raising of them will be made manifest. But while harmless dealt with in this light, they become fraught with evil when they are really

accepted as previous questions, and when our acceptance of the faith, of which I am now speaking as light, is suspended on our ability to respond to them in the first instance, and on some ground which does not assume what in this light we are accepting.

Let us here see that to suspend the faith that the end of our being is to glorify God and enjoy Him, on the issue of any metaphysical or scientific reasoning, such as I have referred to, is not merely to suspend it; it is actually to give it up altogether. The purpose of God that we should glorify and enjoy Him implies that God has so constituted us that we may know Him and enjoy Him apart from all metaphysical questions or capacity of considering them. In the light of eternal life we no more doubt that it is the light of life than in the consciousness of our temporal life we doubt its reality. When these so-called previous questions are urged on our attention we cannot, without being false to our own consciousness, accept them as such.

3

To one who has long lived practically in the faith that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him, and who, in seeking to attain to this great end of his being, has assumed the Bible as a Divine revelation given to him for his guidance and help, the questions to which I am referring come simply as a trial of his faith. However at first taken on trust from his

parents and teachers it has long ceased to be so held. He seems to himself in his acting on it to have proved it. But his proving of it has never, strictly speaking, been the mere testing of an hypothesis. It has from the first dawn of what he would now dignify with the name of faith been the "obedience of faith," that is, a submission to the authority of light. The witness of light has always accompanied what was true in the measure in which he discerned its truth. What experience added in the spiritual results of his obedience of faith was an additional confirmation of that faith, sealing it—as tasting that God is good goes beyond seeing that God is good. For there are these two steps:—God's testimony that He has given to us Eternal Life, and the testimony that this is so which he that believeth hath in himself in the consciousness of the Eternal Life quickened in him in his believing. And I say this consciousness is not to be regarded as an hypothesis tested by experience, or an assent of the mind on external authority merely. The Divine witness to our spirits, as that which the words contain "God has given to us Eternal Life," dawns on us, and however connected in its coming to us with the external testimony of man or book, is itself quite distinct from that outward teaching which is the occasion of drawing our attention to it; and the inherent authority of the Divine light is at once the real and ultimate ground of faith and its justification. To this Divine authority in truth it is that our Lord directs attention

when He says, "If I speak the truth why do ye not believe Me?" This Divine authority being responded to with the obedience of faith which is due to it, then follows that experience of the truth believed which no mere historical or traditional acceptance of it as a dogma can bring—from the very nature of things it cannot: an experience which, in the language of Scripture, constitutes the believer a living proof of the truth of what he believes; a proof in the first place only to himself, and strictly speaking to himself only absolute, but yet what makes him an important witness in the matter to others,—a living voice to them, calling upon them to taste and see that God is good. The man to whom the path of life is known as to one who has long walked in it, with the certainty that it is no dream in which he lives, but the highest and most assured reality, is being ever more and more impressed by the cumulative evidence of the present ever adding itself to the sum of the past,—is by his own need ever called to the analysis which I now make, or to say to himself, "Putting all this experience aside, what antecedent to experience was there to justify my entrance on the path in which I have been having this experience?"

But such a retrospect as I am now attempting—and with the special desire to make it profitable to those now standing where I stood half a century ago—has naturally engaged me in this analysis, that I may fix the attention on what there is antecedent to the

experience of the Divine life, to commend that life and justify the choice of it,—what there is antecedent to the proved effects of believing to justify faith.

More especially, and seeking to be as elemental as I can, what is there to justify the faith that the end of our being is to glorify God and enjoy Him, and that in relation to this end a Divine revelation is given to us? In other words, what light has this conception of the end of our being in itself? and, assuming that light to be felt to be light, what is there in Revelation when taken to that light to justify the faith of the relation to that light in which Revelation claims to stand?

Approaching these questions with the utmost singleness of eye to which I can attain,—and all extrinsic considerations of authority without, or experience within apart—I seem to myself to know surely that there is self-commending light in the conception that the end of my being is to glorify and enjoy God; and that taken to this light the Scriptures more surely connect themselves with it, and in proportion as they are understood vindicate their claim to be subservient to it. If this is really so, then the seeing that it is so is here the right starting-point; and it was rightly the starting-point of my ministry, and is the point from which I most desire others to start,—whether as teachers, or, what is first, as thinkers to whom the problem of the end of our existence has all the interest of existence.

Are there then no prior questions? and how are what claim to be prior questions to be dealt with? If the conception that the end of our being is to glorify and enjoy God have that light in itself which I recognise it as having, there can be no prior question, that is to say, no question to be taken up before we can accept that light as light. I do not say that the light there is in this conception of the end of our being shines to us as the sun at noon-day, forcing acceptance on all. Nor that, while it shines on all, all who turn to it with open eye see it alike clearly; nor that any man, however brightly it shines to himself, can insist on another's seeing it as he does, or sit righteously in judgment on the measure of blameworthiness inferred in not so seeing it, or even in not consciously seeing it at all as anything other and higher than mere human thought. What I say is, that this light is shining for and in us all, and that, being considered with the quiet, calm attention which the bare statement of what it claims to be demands, it reveals itself as light—it may be slowly, but with steadily-increasing clearness.

If I have this faith about this light, why am I anxious to resist all claim of other questions to be prior questions? Why do I practically claim the priority for this question, and in truth desire that the other questions, which it is sought to put before it, should be left unconsidered until it is first met and answered by its own light?

If this conception be the true conception it must have its light in itself, and that a light shining for all. Am I intended to glorify and enjoy God? Then this end of my being must be intimated to me by God in such a way as makes it understandable to me as a man,—be in fact a light lighting every man that cometh into the world. The question—Is this indeed the end of my being, or only some fond dream of fancy wandering into the region of the unknown?—cannot wait for its answer like previous questions, such questions as metaphysics or science raise,—raise, but seem unable to solve, or at least so to solve as that the solution given is intelligible to all, commends itself to all, and enables men to move forward in the path of existence with freedom in its light. Believing that the true conception of the end of our being has its light in itself, and being really grasped is surely accepted, I can have no fear of questions metaphysical or scientific, as if legitimately pursued according to the true laws which hold in either region, they can ever lead to reasonable doubt as to the trustworthiness of what I recognise as light in the higher region in which we now are. Truth in all regions must be consistent with itself. And therefore no legitimate conclusion of Metaphysics or Science can contradict the Divine intimation to man of the Divine will for man. But am I true to the constitution of my being if I am tempted to turn away from all by which, and in which, God speaks to me of His will for me,—

speaks to me as a man because concerning what He wills me to be as a man; therefore speaks what all may hear and understand,—to settle first such so-called previous questions as few can ever understand when stated,—few can ever seem to themselves to solve.

To say that this is right and due is really to say that God has not intended man to glorify and enjoy Him, and the great question which man would thus suspend on previous questions would by the permission of such suspense be really answered in the negative, and have in truth no place at all.

This seems very clear to me. If a man is entitled to say, "Before you believe that the end of your being is to glorify God and to enjoy Him, you must first solve such and such metaphysical and scientific questions," I must answer, If I must first solve these questions, then it cannot be that the end of my being is to glorify and enjoy Him. Such a necessity is incompatible with such an end. This, I say, seems to me very clear. But what may be clear enough, even if this is not clearly seen, is that if God, intending that we should glorify and enjoy Him, has really never left Himself without a witness—many witnesses addressing themselves to all men; if he has appointed the bounds of our habitation that we should seek after Him; if the invisible things of God are clearly seen; if all things in fact really witness for God :—then to turn from all these teachers, and from

all the divine forms of answer to the heart which says, "I am a stranger on the earth, hide not Thy commandments from me," and to ask an answer from Metaphysics and Science, is the sure path to unbelief, because it is putting from us the legitimate grounds of faith.

4.

Whatever right interest Metaphysics or Science have for us will remain to them though we refuse to contemplate them as the proper and ultimate court of appeal in religion, or to submit to the suspension of our faith as to our God and our relation to Him and His purpose for us on the determination of questions of Metaphysics or Science. Such a demand would find its only parallel in a demand to suspend our faith as to our own and each other's personality, or as to the existence of the external world, on the questionings of Metaphysics.

Therefore I conclude as to the abiding right to start from that faith as to the great end of man's being from which I started in the path of teaching fifty years ago.

As to the further faith concerning the gift of Revelation and the "previous questions" here raised by Historical Criticism or by Psychology, the true faith here also is to me independent of such questions, and whatever attention they may rightly claim is not

due to the fundamental interest belonging to *previous* questions.

Surely the right issue here is this:—I read the Bible and I accept it as teaching me to glorify God and enjoy Him. Am I justified in doing so? or do I deceive myself in recognising this Divine power as in it? or can I know certainly that the Bible is teaching me to glorify God and enjoy Him? And as to this I say that we know in point of fact that the deepest convictions as to this claim of the Scriptures on man's faith—the most living certainty—has always been quite independent of historical criticism and of psychology.

The psychological question of the possibility of God's so speaking to men by men as that the result will be pure light given and received,—the limits of humanity in speakers and in hearers being had respect to by the Divine Wisdom,—this possibility, however it has been questioned by psychology, can be no question to the man in whose experience the possibility is a realised fact; and it is so in the case of every man who is consciously led by the Scriptures in a path of self-evidencing light. And then, as to Historical Criticism, if God in the Scriptures so speaks by men to me, a man, that the conviction that He does so is warranted by my conscious experience, then I have a certainty that what I am receiving is of God, and that the response of faith to it is due from me which is independent of the actual history of what I

read, and is what I neither dare to suspend, nor—without doing violence to my own being—can suspend on the issues raised by historical criticism.

But it may be asked, "Is not this independence of historical criticism at all events individual and exceptional, even if it be no delusion, or mere self-confidence and a trust in one's own judgment; and has not the accepted process of teaching been the commencing with historical faith? and has not historical criticism come into disfavour only since it has begun to yield results adverse to accepted opinions?" I know, and do not forget, that the great repulsion felt to historical criticism by so many is repulsion to the fruits it seems to be bearing, while I also know that such independence of it as I now speak of is exceptional, and that those who are most offended by its alleged results, are more in the way of endeavouring to meet it on its own ground, and seek to correct its assumed erroneous conclusions by a more perfect form of itself. I am far indeed from doubting that the evil may be so dealt with successfully, but I feel it every way important not to take this course in dealing with previous questions. The claim of the Bible to be what we accept it as being must be independent of historical criticism, or it does not exist at all. Its claim is addressed to all, and must rest on ground appreciable by all. That ground may remain unconsidered, and an acceptance on traditionary grounds

may be given so unquestioning that the need of weighing the true ground is never felt; and when it is asserted that our people accept the Bible as Mahommedans the Koran, or Hindoos the Vedas, that which is asserted is painfully true.

But have our people no other or higher grounds accessible to them? Is not, indeed, other and higher ground forced on them by the Bible itself? "What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? Is not my word like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" If men accept the Scriptures because of their traditional prestige, which is common to them and the Koran and the Vedas, and not because their response in conscience justifies their claims to be from God, this is not as it should be. And if the difficulties of historical criticism as applied to our sacred books, and the manifest superficiality and unwarranted character of a mere traditional faith, are at present so urged as to shake men's seeming faith and suggest painful misgiving—often with the result either of giving up Christianity or coming to keep hold of it only as witnessed to by an Infallible Church which puts its seal to the Scriptures and to its own tradition together—this sad condition of things will not be without its compensating good if men are led, as in the sight of God, to consider, with what spiritual capacity they have, what this Book which claims to be a revelation from God has, in what it is and what it teaches, apart from historical criticism, as well as

apart from mere tradition, to justify its claim,—to justify a response on our part to that claim.

And is not this in reality just to begin at the point where the most successful historical criticism, did we attain to it, would place us? Suppose all historical difficulties most satisfactorily disposed of; suppose that on grounds of pure criticism I had come to receive the Gospel with that unquestioning certainty as to all I read with which our children read them, justified to my own mind on pure historical evidence in accepting the words of Jesus as if I heard them from His own lips—His deeds as if I saw them—the Epistles of Apostles as if I were hearing them read in the Churches to which they were originally written—(and surely the most successful critic could do no more for me)—would not the claim of the Bible on my acceptance still ultimately be what it is in itself? I was only brought to stand where they stood who heard and saw what I read, and He, whose words have been so successfully verified, Himself said to those that heard Him, "If I speak the truth why do ye not believe me?"

Let us not then be persuaded to come down to the lower ground of historical criticism for the justification of our acceptance of the Bible, seeing that we have higher grounds to stand on,—and that the only sure ground after all.

The internal evidence of Christianity must be the ultimate ground for faith. Miracles, apart from the

light in that teaching to which they awakened attention, and of which they were an accompaniment in harmony with its nature, would not be foundation enough,—no, not even a resurrection from the dead, apart from that life to which it has been the Father's seal. "God raised Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory that our faith and hope might be in God." But had not His faith and hope been in God—had not His words in death, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," been the voice and utterance of all His life, how could the mere fact of His resurrection from the dead make us wise unto salvation, or have the central and foundation-place which it has in that volume which has been given to teach us how we are to glorify and enjoy God?

Apart from what Jesus was and spoke and did, His resurrection from the dead would be no light of life to man. Assuming such a fact apart from such a history of it and all the inspired interpretation of it, it would have been at most but an inexplicable mystery, a perplexing addition to the natural history of man,—believed, or not believed, of no practical importance.

I therefore begin at the point where the round of historical criticism, however confirmatory of the simple faith of childhood, would place me; and that a point which I dare not refuse to stand on, whatever the seeming "destructive" action of historical criticism may be. Born in this land I am placed face to face

with the Bible, and cannot refuse its high claims, or refuse to weigh them but at my peril. And I cannot say that I cannot weigh its claims. In the gift of conscience my God has put the needed—the only needed—scales into my hands.

II.

RELATION OF PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

I.

THE practical aspect of the relation of a pastor to his people is what is most present to their minds, as well as to his, in the formation of that relation. He is given to them to be a help to them in meeting aright the highest practical demand which life makes on them—viz., to be what they ought to be in their relation to God, and in all human relations also, as seen in the light of God,—forms of obedience to that second commandment of love to our neighbour which is as corollary to that first commandment of love to God.

No doubt in regard to this highest practical view of life the value of a pastor is only that of a supplement to the higher aids for meeting His will concerning them which God has granted to the people;—and a supplement, we believe, by no means essential, or so related to the higher aids as that the right use of these requires his intervention as their interpreter.

Reason and conscience within, the outward witnesses also external to man himself without which God has never left Himself, and finally that Divine revelation which is addressed to reason and to conscience, and seals the testimony of nature and providence while it goes beyond them ;—these all belong to the people, and are theirs apart from, and independent of, their pastor. They could be used without him,—nay, must be used in receiving him, for from these he receives honour, not they from him. If a true pastor, and in the measure in which he is a true pastor, they will be his witnesses; while in relation to them he is only as one listening to Divine voices *along with his people*, and as one to whom they are more familiar, helping them to understand, and therefore, in so far as he is successful in this, helping them to *independent conviction.*

Nevertheless, the pastor's relation to that direct light which alone has authority is such as rightly invests him with, in some sense, a sacred interest in the eyes of his people, of the special and delicate character of which, indeed, it behoves them and him to be tender lest its "fine edge warp ;" for the transformation of *a help towards understanding* into an *authoritative interpreter* is but too easy, and the indolence of mind which prefers to bow to authority rather than think is at least as great a snare to the taught as the pleasantness to the flesh of "being called master" is to the teacher. But as together

scholars in the school of Christ, the one Master, they will avoid these snares on either hand, while all true obligation for help in hearing Christ's own voice will be felt according to the inestimable value of such help.

But in now recalling, as the essential element in the mutual interest and attraction of a pastor and a people, the practical aspect of their union, a more important consideration still presents itself—one which I desire much to commend to the special attention of any of my readers in whose case their own position as pastors and teachers may give a special interest to these reminiscences;—I mean the direction which is given to all a minister's thoughts and labours by the habitual realisation of his own calling as being to help his people to meet a demand which God is making on them. Their dimmer sense of this demand, which is his right hold of them, he will tenderly cherish, while he will seek for himself increasing realisations of that demand,—knowing that the measure in which he realises it and understands it will be the measure of his fitness to help them. Here great simplicity is imparted to his task, great singleness to his eye, by the knowledge that the demand of God which he is called to study is addressed equally to himself and his people. It is one and the same lesson—learning what he is himself called to be, and what he is to call on them to be.

Here difficulty will first be felt in the seeming disappearance of what had been to him at first a com-

mon ground with his people, the ground on which they had met him and welcomed him. He had come to them as one who would help them to know God's voice and to obey it; they had welcomed him because they desired such help, desired to know God's voice and to obey it. On coming to know them more nearly he finds that the same words have not always the same meaning to them and to him, and that while some there may be in whom their right meaning is more realised than it yet is by himself, in the general case the reverse holds. He could find no more fitting words to express his highest conception as to that will of God concerning man which alone gives meaning to his own existence as a pastor and teacher, than those with which his people have been familiar from their childhood—I mean the answer to the opening question of the General Assembly's Shorter Catechism. But they are likely to be comparatively a small number of his flock whose habitual consciousness as to the end of their own being, as seen in the light of God, accords with this language; while the greater number would be found unable to give any intelligent exposition in expansion of the mere meaning of these beautiful and well-chosen words.

Yet, the conclusion would be hasty and dangerous that they knew nothing of the subject—that the words which they repeated by rote had no meaning to them; or, at least, that the assumption of their truth, and the endeavour to connect them with reason and conscience,

would have no response in them. On the contrary, such an endeavour would in this land be at least as hopeful as that of the Divine appeal by the mouth of the prophet, "If I be a Father, where is mine honour? If I be a Master, where is my service?" The young pastor,—brought, in obedience to new responsibilities, into nearer contact with the inner life of the members of his flock than he may have previously known while only a preacher—has here a narrower path to tread. He could certainly commit no graver mistake than to assume, either from the personal acceptance of himself or from attention to his preaching, that the sense of the importance and obligation of religion thus manifested implied any such understanding of the end of man's being, or any welcome of the grace of God through which that end is within their reach; as it must be the object of his teaching to lead them to. Some, doubtless, there may be as to whom this assumption would be justified. Yea, some he may recognise as already far before him in the path in which he is himself walking, and in which he seeks to induce all to walk; and this may be the case also where he has no discernment of it. But there is nothing more apt to occur at the commencement of a ministry than an over-estimate of the value of the interest it may be awaking.

At the same time it is most needful to guard against the *reaction* that may come when the amplest admissions as to the claims of religion are found to

have so much less meaning than they ought to have; and also to be made in so much confusion of mind and darkness—often full of contradictions. To separate between what, in these admissions, is a real hearing of the voice of God in conscience, and what is a blind effort to harmonise such hearing of God's voice with misconceptions both of the love that is speaking and of the way in which its demand can alone be met,—this is a delicate and difficult task; yet full of hope if he who attempts it is careful to prove, in the keeping of his heart with all diligence, the practical discrimination to which he would help his people.

Much that comes back to me in this connection may better receive attention in recalling later ministerial experience than that of my entrance on ministerial work. I here insist only on the importance of abiding in one's proper place in relation to all the elements of the direct divine teaching in every attempt to teach. I mean preserving the mental attitude of listening, and inviting the people to listen also, as to that which, if they listen, they can hear, and will hear continually more and more distinctly the more they are exercised in patient, reverent listening.

If the teacher is really in any measure successful in what respects himself here, he will be found in that measure speaking because he hears; and the awe of hearing, and the confidence that comes in being taught of God, will impress that character on his

teaching which will give it the right authority, and no more. No more, because it will be felt to be an appeal to an authority, not an independent authority, —an appeal which forbids any assent beyond what is really consciously yielded to the authority appealed to.

I cannot doubt that of this nature was the authority with which our Lord Himself taught, "I can do nothing of myself—as I hear I judge. My words are not mine but His that sent me." "It is written in the prophets they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath learned of the Father cometh unto me."

The pastor will promise his people that in waiting on God's teaching they will grow in the discernment of God's voice, if this is his own experience,—if the will of God that we should glorify God and enjoy Him is becoming continually more and more luminous to him by the Divine light that shines in that conception itself as what God is and what He has given man to be—creating him in His own image—is more and more realised,—if the witness without which God has never left Himself, in all that from without addresses our inward capability of faith, is ever becoming to him more distinct and articulate.

2.*

It imparts great simplicity to the task of the pastor that he and his people are together the sheep of the

Lord's pasture, for whom one and the same food is provided. The will of God, the bread of life, is not one thing in his case and another in theirs. That Divine voice in respect of which it is said "Hear, and your souls shall live," is in his inward ear and in theirs; and according as he is hearing it, and understanding what it says to himself, he is hearing and understanding what it says to them; and so he is qualified to fix their attention on it, and to help them in distinguishing between it and the many other voices asking their attention.

But not as one on whose authority they are to proceed in listening to this voice rather than to other voices. The authority—the right to be listened to—is in the voice itself. It is knowing and feeling this that he bows to it; and therefore it is in knowing and feeling this that he expects them to bow to it; thus coming to recognise that inherent authority in it, which he is recognising. The advantage of his position, as compared with theirs, is that the hearing of this voice, the weighing of what it speaks, the consideration of all to which its teaching tends, is to him the great business of his life in a special sense and in special circumstances which favour his hearing and understanding; while in his so engaging he listens not for himself only, but for them also. For because of his relation to them, when he listens for himself he listens for them also, and as one to whom it pertains to realise all special hindrances to their hearing, that

he may help them concerning these. Life being what it is and its distractions what they are, it is not difficult to see how it may profit the many that one should have it as his special calling, so to listen to what God says to all as to combine with his own hearing and obeying an understanding of the position of others, which shall qualify him for helping them to hear and understand that they may obey.

If he hears clearly and understands, the simple utterances in clear speech of what he hears will help them to hear; and all in his speaking which accords with his attitude as one hearing the voice of God, and not speaking of himself, or expressing his own opinion, will tend greatly to placing the hearers consciously in the attitude of being called to discern God's voice, and will bring with it the safeguard of healthy awe, and the solemn sense of responsibility which is according to the truth of things,—"For what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."

The pure enunciation of truth in the light of truth and in living oneness with it, has a special power to reach the ear for truth that is in man, even when this may be all. But the knowledge of the hindrances to true hearing, and of the temptations not to listen with an open ear, which will come with much earnest weighing of the difference between what men are and what God calls them to be, will fit him who speaks God's words for further much-needed help.

Of course, I describe an ideal rather than any real

religious teacher; but it is well to contemplate the true ideal, and seek in measure to realise it, and the attempt will have many desirable results. A brief notice of some of these is all to which my retrospect leads me here.

1. This being a region of truth, with realities to be known, I need scarcely say that the first obvious result as to the teacher himself, and with corresponding gain to the taught, will be his becoming more at home among the realities with which he is occupied; that is to say, the abiding will of God for man will be more and more realised, and the self-evidencing authority of light which belongs to it, be more and more recognised and responded to. Then all the aids to faith which God has here provided,—those witnesses for what He is in relation to man by which God seals His expectation from man, and without which He has never left Himself, will be ever more clearly understood. I mean such witness as the Apostle appeals to (Acts xiv. 17, Romans i. 20), and our Lord's own appeal, "Consider the lilies." He hears St. Paul, he hears the Lord speaking to him, not these recorded words of theirs. He feels the appeal to the Divine light within. He responds to it.

2. But he must needs realise more and more what obedience to the Divine Will will make him. Blessed are the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart—these are the meditations on the Will of God fulfilled in man and the seal of the Divine authority of that will.

A corresponding meditation on the other side is what we have in such words as, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

3. The relation to the will of God concerning man of the means which God employs in order to the fulfilment of that Divine will in man,—this he becomes capable of appreciating as that Divine Will itself is more and more embraced by his intelligence and his faith. Doubtless the means employed shed light on the end contemplated no less truly than the clear apprehension of the end contemplated is the true mental initiation to the understanding of the means. Faith grows in dwelling on the mutual light of both; and he whose life's work it in a special sense is to come into full contact with the things that are, and look them in the face that he may be qualified to say to himself and others seeing them, "these things are so," will continually rejoice and give thanks that he is knowing what is,—not speculating what may be or should be.

3.

The habit of an immediate transition from the perception of truth in the region of religion to the practical demand which the light makes is manifestly widely apart from speculative thought. That on which light falls may be turned into a subject of

abstract speculative thought, but the demand which I assume to be responded to is not a call to think so and so, but a call to do so and so,—in the highest reference, not a call to think so and so of God, but a call to feel so and so towards God.

What is being learned is of the nature of an addition to our knowledge, not of the facts with which our attention is occupied, but of their relation to ourselves,—to our hearts and minds, and what, in that they are facts, they call on us to be.

If this distinction is properly considered, its exceeding practical importance must be felt. It is not merely that abstract speculative thoughts on the great facts which underlie religious obligation may deceive by passing with us for being in some sort religion; they have a direct tendency to weaken the faith which accepts these facts, and this even when they are intended and may seem fitted to strengthen it. And we can safely engage in them only when we hold our faith altogether apart from them. If religion have its foundation in the truth of things, and its obligation be real, its obligation is alike on all men; and the facts which are at its foundation must be patent to all—cognisable by all. This, as religious teachers, we assume the case to be; and in regard to the highest relation—as in regard to lower relations,—our teaching assumes the existence of the relation we speak of to our people—of God as their Heavenly Father, of themselves as God's offspring. Just as

when we deal with our several families, we speak to them as standing in various family relations to each other, and in the higher and in the lower region alike our teaching as to obligations of duty proceeds on the assumed reality of the relations in question. This assumption, as implied in any possibility of religion, is made in good faith, being seen to be justifiable in absolute truth: otherwise to make it would have in it something of the nature of a pious fraud. But what I now notice is the effect which the realisation of it will have on thought and teaching.

The immediate effect on the teaching of the pastor of the desire to meet his people on the practical ground on which they meet and welcome him, and to be to them that help to meet the demand of conscience in their relation to God is to narrow the range of subjects from which to choose in his pulpit ministrations, forbidding as unsuitable much that had an interest to himself as a thinker in his course of preparatory study. And it is well for his people and for himself also if he submit to the limits a wise consideration of their mental position suggests. Laboured proofs of what they already believe, will, he can see, be worse than superfluous—they will be distracting. If he could succeed in giving this kind of interest to his teaching he would be at least running the risk of substituting the intellectual acceptance of an argument for faith in the living God, a loss the greatness of which he will feel if he have discerned in himself

the difference between what of such assent to logical conclusion he has known and what he has known of the response of sonship to the Father of his spirit, saying to him, "My son, give me thine heart." How soon the whole attitude of their spirits may be changed for the worse by unwise occupation of their thoughts with arguments and proofs of what are already to them—and that rightly—spiritual axioms! No one will run this risk as to his people who as to himself has come—it may be by a painful path—to distinguish between his religion, much or little, and the laborious searchings of thought which he has known in his study of theology and philosophy. Such usurpation by these of the proper interest of the Divine life he cannot forget, although he may have been successful in relegating them to their proper place, and may in that place give them their due honour. That due honour may indeed imply in him sharing with his people his thoughts in both these regions of high interest, when these have been duly proved by the experience which is their ultimate test; as no doubt it is the light in which they are best and most safely considered from the first. He who yields himself to the power of the self-commending utterance of the Heavenly Father's will,—who is yielding to the drawings of the cords of love as I have said in responding to the words of God, "My son, give me thine heart,"—who is reverently listening to that witness for God's love which is addressed to him, as to all, in the shining

of the sun and the falling of the rain—a testimony that God's love rests on us, as our Lord speaks,—who thus hears that testimony for the Father's love in nature and providence to which He appeals who came to revive the witnesses of the Father's love as the Son who dwells in the bosom of the Father,—who in the school of love advances from these beginnings seeing all the elements in the great salvation in the light of love—the love that has come in forms which should prepare for the due welcome of its fulness—the love which, in its full shining, sheds light back on all its dim *foreshowings*:—he who has been led by his pastor in this path, or, it may be, has been found by his pastor already in this path and far advanced in it beyond himself, such an one will be prepared to share and even aid the thoughts of his pastor in any path of theologic or philosophic thought in which the *intellect*, guarded by the higher light of the Spirit of God, may seek these highest elevations of which it is capable, intelligent apprehension of the mind of God in relation to man, and all the Divine counsel concerning man, so far as man's present capacity reaches. True religion is the pre-requisite for the healthful study of theology as a philosophy, and also I feel even as a system, ever pulling up speculation; as Lord Bacon has in the region of science substituted knowledge of facts for the day-dreams of a former time.

4.

The question "What ought men to be?" takes in the young pastor the double form, "What ought I to be?" "What ought my people to be?" But it has one answer in either form. The will of God is one as to the one and the many. For the pastor to be in the light of that will as to himself, is to be in it as to his people. The Father of spirits whose voice is to him, "My son, give me thine heart," is in spirit saying to each individual of his flock, "Give me thine heart;" for they are all His offspring, and His desire is towards them all. And as the demand made—the loving invitation—is one and the same to one and to all, so is it direct and immediate to each—direct and immediate in all that belongs to it. The voice is one known by each that hears in the very hearing of it: the witnesses without which God has never left Himself witness to all equally, and, being listened to, have their authority in themselves, their trustworthiness being self-commending. The due response on man's part is the same therefore in every case.

This is true whether we consider the faith called for or the love which faith quickens. No man can believe God for me, as no man can hear God for his brother, or love God for his brother. It is written in the prophets, "they shall be all taught of God." Such directness of dealing with us individually only accords with the nature of the demand,

"Give me thine heart," as well as with the relation to Himself which God recognises—"My son."

Therefore, faith in the pastor is identical in its nature with faith in the people, the capacity of faith exercised by him and by them being the same, and in them the light in which it is exercised the same,—the same in its inward and outward elements. If, therefore, the teacher teach successfully, he will have simply helped the taught to hear themselves the one Divine Teacher whom he is hearing; and so themselves to see in a light in which he is seeing. They are receiving nothing in a way of trust in him, either as subjection to an authority or as confidence in his greater insight.

The pastor who understands this will be necessarily very jealous over himself and over his people, that he and they may in their relation present a mental attitude corresponding to it.

And as in all his keeping of his own heart and mind he seeks to obey the word "Call no man master," so, as much as in him lies, he will seek to save his people from calling him master. And this will be to him matter of anxious solicitude. The temptation to err here he will indeed know to be great on both sides. It is not easy to say on which side it is greatest, whether on the side of the people to lean, or on the part of the teacher to be leant upon. They listen to him as knowing so much more than themselves, and in proportion as he is felt earnest, and one uttering

deep convictions, they will be the more disposed to accept his word. He, on his part, may welcome their assent the more easily because of the depth of his own convictions—this even although he may be saved from the self-seeking that would be gratified by their deference.

In proportion as a teacher of religion accepts—and with joyful thankfulness—his place in its aspect of absolute equality with the taught as far as he and they come to be together children of the light, he will understand the Apostle's words, "Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are sharers of your joy." But in this proportion, also, will he be jealous over himself and his people that he should abide in his own consciousness and in their thoughts in that place of nothingness which the words recognise, "So, neither is he that planteth anything, &c." For we know that here the temptation to err is great both to pastor and to people. As to him, it is not merely the temptation to seek to be something, and to be leant upon to which he is exposed. His consciousness of clearer light and the very depth of his convictions, while this rightly intensifies his earnestness, is also a temptation to accept too easily their response to his words, which he knows are true; and to forget how far from seeing light in God's light that response may be, however honestly given.

And on the part of the people we know that though

some sense of the obligation of religion be to them the interest of their teacher, and though they have welcomed him as seeing in him promise of help to being what they ought to be; yet their apprehension of what religion truly is may be so superficial and vague, and their temptation to call man master may be so strong, that they may easily give their teacher a wrong place, contenting themselves, as it were, to know Divine things at second-hand through him. And this danger may be all the more because of that very depth of conviction and earnestness on the part of their teacher which, while it attracts them to him, inspires confidence in his being right.

The danger is on both sides. The protection must chiefly be realisation of the danger on the side of the teacher. If he is willing to accept a wrong place he will certainly receive it. Nay, if his higher sense of what religion is do not make him anxiously to watch against this, it will be so. This anxiety in him is his safety and theirs.

The thought ever present with him that his people are to *share his light*—what is to him light of life—will make the pastor fear lest, while he himself is calling no man master, his people may be calling him master. That thought will in many ways, besides the natural working of this fear, influence his teaching, —I mean both his choice of subjects and his way of illustrating them,—an influence the more important because fitted to counteract certain unhealthful in-

fluences incident to his college training and his theological reading, however much he may really have been benefited by both,—and in some respects more fitted for his work because of them.

5.

To see the importance of that independent attitude in relation to himself which the pastor will wish his people to maintain, we must consider the difference between his work and that of a lecturer commending a system of thought. Even in that case, the lecturer will measure his own success by the reality of independent perception of the truth of his views which, by his illustration of them, has been reached by his hearers. But the endeavour to bring his people into the light of life is something very different from sharing with them an intellectual conviction, or commending to them the grounds on which it is held. The Divine life, into the fellowship of which he would bring them, he is living in the exercise of his spiritual nature, and of his capacity of knowing God—the Father of his spirit—and having communion with Him in the life of sonship; and having this as his aim, the imparting new, and even true views—however independently held—might leave his teaching still a failure. His teaching is about the facts of existence in its spiritual aspect. That is successful when it brings men to know these facts as facts; and so places

them under their practical power that they press with their proper pressure on the will, leaving room only for the reflection, "Seeing that these things are so what manner of persons ought we to be?" Here heart and mind are possessed with "these things;" and the independence of himself to which the teacher has brought the taught consists in this that he has placed and left him alone with God, seeing in the light of God, and in that degree knowing himself and what he is called to be. When this is the result accomplished there is no longer any room for such wrong feeling, as has been referred to, to enter into the relation of pastor and people.

There is, in truth, no demand for faith, which the pastor has to enforce, which the people are not prepared to concede, and his appeals will be to an authority which they will not question—reason and conscience, and those eternal witnesses, creation and providence—or the Bible.

And yet, entering on his appointed task with the advantage of all this common ground, the first effect of letting the light of the true ideal of Christianity fall on his work is likely to be discouraging. It needs not that this light be bright or strong. If it only be true, however dim, it will reveal a superficiality and inadequacy in all that at first thought is so full of promise, which will at least be very trying to his faith and hope. He may even be tempted to feel that the mind

of the school-boy repeating by rote that man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever, is typical of the general acknowledgment of religious truth which seemed present in that acceptance of himself as a religious teacher, the warm cordiality of which he had so prized.

But this would be a temptation. That reception did not mean all that it might seem to mean, but it was not therefore meaningless, or without a meaning for which to be thankful. To take for granted, because of the value which seemed to be attached to religion, that the true nature of religion was understood; or that, because the people would recognise the authority of appeals to the voices inward and from without by which God makes Himself known, and commends His authority and His love, they therefore knew these Divine voices, and were responding to them with the obedience of faith :—to take all this for granted would doubtless be a great error; but to conclude from the meagreness of meaning in men's honest profession that they had no meaning of any value at all would also be an error. Whatever of superficiality, of vagueness, even of misconception, there may be, there is also something of real value and of foundation on which to build. However much may seem a mere traditional belief, having no spiritual substance, the sense of religious obligation has yet a living root.

Comparing what is with what ought to be, one may

be tempted to feel as if the attempt to raise men from this lower level to that higher level were altogether hopeless. These considerations will save from this temptation. The pastor teaches that what God is saying to himself, inwardly and from without, He is saying to all. This he knows, in knowing that it is God's voice to which his own heart responds. If God is not saying it to all He is not saying it to him. The other consideration is that he discerns indications that God is speaking to them even in what shows that they are not understanding Him.

The various circumstances of individuals, which in the sight of God qualify responsibility, are hid from the teacher. Nor would it be desirable that he should be able to estimate them. He is not a taskmaster. It is enough for him that he knows the faith to which they are called, and the capacity of faith with which they are endowed, and the corresponding grounds of faith furnished to them. That capacity it is his simple part to address, and those grounds it is his part to illustrate. His hope in working is that the spiritual capacity which he addresses will be quickened into consciousness under his appeals to it, and the ground of faith be seen to be such, according as he succeeds in placing them in their true light.

Thus entering aright on his ministry, seeking the right end by the right means, and keeping that end steadily before him, even the smallest grain of the

right interest in his teaching will be turned to account, will connect itself profitably with his teaching, and with the power of light will gradually be freed from what is merely traditional in the sense of religious obligation, and all that fear of God which is only obedience to the customs and the counsels of men.

6.

After the realisation of the high practical aspect of the pastoral relation, as underlying its interest to the flock and to himself, the next consideration is a right conception of the help to be what they ought to be which is given to a people in the gift of a pastor.

The young entrant on the ministry is called to ask himself, How are my ministrations to be connected with the accomplishment of the will of God in my people? He knows that God, who has never left Himself without a witness, is not silent to them either as to their relation to Him—that they are his offspring,—or as to His Divine feeling. Both the outgoing of His heart towards them and the response due from them, God is Himself intimating to them, in all that within them by which He is saying to each man, "My son, give me thine heart." And what God witnesses thus to man inwardly He witnesses to them also outwardly, giving them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness; for they are reasonably expected to "connect God without them with God within them," and

to know their Father in Heaven as making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

By this light they are encompassed, and it is light not only as to their relation to God, but also as to their relation to each other, as it springs out of their relation to God and in that light alone is rightly understood,—"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven,"—a light which is one with that which shines for us in the relation of the second commandment to the first.

Further, what God speaks to them thus within is what without they listen to with the Bible in their hands, which repeats and seals this Divine teaching, and sheds on the love of God to man and what that love chooses only for man, as these are revealed in the manner of man's being and in the circumstances by which he is encompassed, the full and perfect light of the Gospel in which the Son who dwells in the bosom of the Father reveals the Father,—that full and perfect revelation also, as well as that which was its dawn and in which it was as in germ, being accompanied by that present dealing of the living God with man's spirit which accompanies all revelation of God, and makes it that Divine voice, which he that hath ears to hear is called to hear, being the ultimate ground of man's obligation to be taught of God. This Divine provision for their being what God wills them to be his people enjoy

altogether independently of him.—What is added to this in the gift of a pastor? How is he supplemental to all this light of life?

This being rightly answered the pastor knows his right place, and may be expected to take it.

In one view, the place thus known is seen to be so subordinate as to be as nothing. That men are to be all taught of God may seem to make no account of the human teacher—"Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but God giveth the increase."

These words have a deeper sense in relation to the light of life than what would belong to them if we would express by them God's part and man's part in lower regions of teaching; while even in such regions a true recognition of God will be analogous to that which the Apostle expresses; and the analogy is instructive. The pastor who accepts and understands his true subordination is thinking of himself and of his flock as under one Divine teaching, which is direct alike to them and to him, and to which it is his part to direct their attention, helping them to understand by the utterances of his own understanding of it.

If the pastor helps his flock really, he is bringing them to share in his light—such a reality of sharing in light as makes them conscious of being in light as independent of him as his is of them.

That God should invite men to such a personal nearness to Himself as the consciousness of being taught of God, and—as to what we believe and why

we believe—throws nothing between us and the living God Himself, may seem almost inconsistent with any such thing as human teaching at all. But this in this highest region is, as I have said, analogous to the Divine order in lower regions. We are familiar in these with such a participation in the light of the teacher by the taught as makes their hold of what they learn as independent of him as his hold of it is of them. But the region most akin in this view, as in dignity and importance also, to the region of religious teaching, is the region of moral teaching. No moral teacher can feel that he has succeeded in teaching so long as moral precepts are accepted from him on *his* authority, and are not yet seen by their own inherent light. No father can feel that he has taught his son to be true, so long as he speaks the truth only because his father has bade him do so. Yet the love of truth for its own sake, quickened in the son, gladdens the truthful father's heart not less, but more—infinitely more—than any rigid observance of truth in deference to his authority. Indeed, such deference will be painful, not pleasant, if it occupies the place which belongs rightfully to the higher motive.

The place of the pastor in his relation to that Divine teaching to which his is thus subordinate, has many attractions when rightly conceived of. It is one of freedom from a kind of responsibility under which misconception here may bring one. If the taught

were ultimately dependent on the authority of the teacher, the care of souls, great weight as it is, would be still heavier.

Rising to the higher level of religion, parental teaching has still the same character, seeking to bring the taught into the fellowship of light. No parent who is himself alive to God through faith in Christ can rest satisfied with the simple reception by his children of Divine truth as he knows it and presents it to them.

If he speaks to them of God as he himself knows Him, it is that they may come themselves to know Him as he knows Him. The value to himself of what he knows of God is the life in God's favour to which it has raised him. His religious teaching of his children contemplates nothing short of their participation in this same Divine life. If his labour of love in this is successful, the elements of that life in them will be just what they are in him. There will be the same disclosures of Divine teaching, the same inward hearing of the voice of God saying, "Give me thine heart," the same apprehension of the love in God which makes this demand reasonable; or rather, the same hearing of the demand as made by love for what love alone can value—all the apprehension of the Father's heart, all the response of sonship, to which, if to any human consciousness, belongs the character of light—Divine light—self-evidencing light—light known as light apart from all reverence for the human teacher.

Many are the practical results of importance which will follow when the direct relation with God into which religious teaching proposes to introduce the taught, and its personal character as being communion of man with God, are understood; and when it is rightly distinguished from all holding of opinions about God. The thought will often suggest itself,—How, if the result is such a being alone with God as this, and if the individual is thus to know himself taught of God and believing God directly, how is such a place given to the human teacher, and why does God use man to teach man when we must be all taught of God? As Christ says, "No man cometh unto me except the Father draw him." This is a part of that constitution of things in which our membership one with another gives a character to the dealings of God with us who are individually His offspring, for which we should not be prepared apart from this membership, and considering only God and the individual man.

If the system of things in which we are embraced be contemplated by us only as a network of fixed laws, which we are capable of so knowing as to turn them to account by conforming to them; and if no mind interested in us—no Father of our spirits—be known as ordering all these things, then we will set ourselves to the work of turning things to the best account, according to the capabilities with which we find ourselves endowed; taking

what is within our reach of all that we feel attractive, not asking why anything that seems good should be beyond our reach. But the case is altogether changed when we see all things in their relation to God, and know ourselves as His offspring, and ascribe to Him a Father's heart in relation to ourselves. In this faith we can believe the Apostle saying, "God appoints the bounds of our habitation," ordering all our circumstances that we may seek after Him: we can believe his Master saying, "The hairs of your head are all numbered." But such faith is tried and submitted to a severe strain when we begin to connect all that comes to us from God with love in God to us as present in it all. And this which we are now considering—the place of man between his brother man and God, in connection with the supreme desire of the heart of God in relation to us, and in subordination to that teaching of God Himself by which we come to know Him and have His will fulfilled in us —is an aspect of humanity which we can contemplate peacefully and confidingly only in the light of God given to us for this end.

I do not mean that the light granted, even when we are most advanced in strength of vision, leaves nothing to be explained (for now we see through a glass darkly), but I know that without understanding all the meaning and all the results in Eternity of that human membership which thus affects our experience of Divine dealing as we are individu-

ally related to God, we can come to see manifold wisdom in this Divine constitution of God's human family. I here only ask attention to the fact that in so many other forms in lower regions the difficulty occurs of harmonising the Divine interest in the individual with the dependence of that individual on others, in respect of what God may be believed to will for him. I may speak of the very beginning of the course of each individual life—the dependence of the babe on its mother. Is this a child of the Most High that we see entrusted, as to its physical well-being, to human care that may prove, and alas! so often does prove unequal to the trust, if not unworthy of it? Not to raise questions which affect physical life only, and its circumstances and its continuance—as to which we cannot say what is absolutely good—we cannot look at desirable conditions, and say that while these seem the portion of the few, all are receiving what, in this view, is best for them; nor can we, as to continuance of life, see death taking the individual offspring of God away at all ages from a first breath, or before it, to extreme old age, and say that each and all have of life what, according to any light we have, is seen to be in itself best. But, rising higher, and to the moral region, we see what is analogous to this difficulty in the higher region of religion. God wills every man to be true, to be righteous, to be loving, and the man who is true, righteous, loving, knows that to be such is good

—absolutely good; nor, if he refers this his state to God, does he see in it other than what is a fulfilment of the will of God in him; nor will he regard the light in which he so judges as other than Divine;—and yet he sees multitudes, as to whom such a moral state is equally desirable not in it.

The higher we rise the difficulty increases. The more our individual preciousness in the sight of God is apprehended, the more is the mystery deepened of our dependence one on another, as to the fulfilment in the individual of the purpose of his Father's love.

Yet there is here only a trial of faith; not a reason for unbelief. The light in which I see that God is love has in all its measures its authority in itself. It is light, and the response of faith is obedience to light.

Seeing myself in my relation to God as an individual man—one of God's offspring—in the highest light yet shed on this relation, I am alone with God in the Divine Light, as to the feelings with which God is regarding me, and as to the response of love which He desires from me. Nothing in the history of my coming into this light affects its self-evidencing character as light. Such questions as "How, if this is God, and this His mind towards me, and this to which I have but now awakened is my relation to Him, and my proper self-consciousness, how have I not known this sooner? How has this my God permitted me to be hitherto in ignorance of this? How has He not forced this light upon me? How

has He at all left my receiving this so contingent on outward circumstances and the teaching of other men as it has been?"—such questions, in another form, ask attention and receive it; and, in God's good time, will also be answered. But in the light of which I am speaking, they do not—they cannot—arise as doubts, or as making it questionable if that light is indeed light and not a beautiful illusion.

Now, the ideal of a Christian pastor is a man in this light, and whose value to his flock is that, as in it, he is a witness for it whose witnessing is to help others to come into it. And his self-consciousness embraces the knowledge that the light is, and that man can see in it, and that in directing others to this light he but speaks of what is, and asks from them the use of a spiritual reason with which they are endowed. That he is in light intended for his people as for himself, seeing by a vision that pertains to them as to him, this it is that determines the true character of his relation to them, and what manner of gift he is to them, and how valuable.

The subordination of his own teaching to the Divine teaching the pastor realises in proportion as he realises the end of religious teaching, and this will be in the measure in which he is himself a scholar in the school of Christ. And this identity of what he is teaching with what he is learning is an advantage to him as a religious teacher which he cannot too highly prize, but should seek to avail himself of to the full; an

advantage not less to the man than to the minister—his care for others helping him as one keeping his own heart with all diligence—his experience in so keeping his own heart helping him to understand and to minister to their need. The simplicity which this imparts to a man's life-work—the singleness of eye which it will give to all his seeing; the additional welcome for his flock's sake of all accession of Divine light—a blending of the joy of the purpose to impart with the joy of receiving: this is to him strength for his work and enlargement of heart. . . .

III.

MODERN RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY.

I.

THESE Reminiscences belong to my early ministry from September, 1825, to May, 1831. The intervening time, now nearly half a century, has brought many changes in different regions of human interest; some of unqualified gain, others of more doubtful character, welcomed or distrusted according to the bias of men's several minds.

In the region of Religion the most obvious change is the more widely-spread, almost universal, attention now engaged by the question of man's relation to God. Our first thought in recognising this change is naturally that it is one for which to be thankful; and this will doubtless be our final thought also, for apathy and indifference here is certainly evil, and as it is of God's mercy that a false peace should be disturbed, so is our hope in Him that the result may ultimately be good.

But the contemplation of this widened circle of

interest in the subject of religion, embracing hostile feeling as well as friendly, awakens various and conflicting feelings, forbidding us to say confidently that, viewed simply in itself and so far as it has gone, the change is on the whole gain. This wide-spread interest is at the same time in great part superficial,—hasty in its utterances, yet also confident and impatient; and this is true alike of the interest that is friendly and of that which is unfriendly.

Yet under this repelling surface-aspect of things we must believe in a present good as well as hope for a greater good in the future. The discordant din of conflicting sects and systems, mutual recriminations, mutual persecutions whereby Christendom is become too truly Babylon,—this evil state of things is becoming not less but more as men's occupation with religion increases. Yet let us not forget that within the visible Church, so unlike the Bride of Christ, is the invisible Church, hid from us but seen of God. Nay, let us not forget how much of what is painful in the aspect of the visible Church is yet due to the erring zeal of men who may yet belong to the invisible Church because of the rightness of their hearts towards God. Our Lord says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Yet so darkened in our time is the glass through which we see one another that the natural outflow of the love of which our Lord speaks is sadly hindered by the difficulties of mutual recognition.

We are not indeed therefore excused, for a genuine love to all should save us from a wrong bearing towards any. But the wisdom of love as practical wisdom seems rarer than love itself, and we cannot doubt that many a man truly seeks his brother's good who errs in his dealing because he derives not his practical guidance as well as his motive from Christ. This thought is a permitted comfort in contemplating many of the objectionable forms in which the present increase of religious zeal is manifested.

As to the wider-spread interest of hostility—or what wears the aspect of hostility—in regard to this also, the pain which is caused by so much questioning of that which is to us most sacred truth is qualified by the hope that such questioning may in part belong to a transition state, the transition from an unintelligent assent to a traditional creed to a true faith.

But however we may comfort ourselves with the thought of good, or even promise of good that may underlie what yet is in itself evil, there is too much within the wide circle of the occupation of thought with the subject of religion which can, as to what now is, cause only unmitigated pain. As we are not to do evil that good may come, so neither are we to be reconciled to evil, even by the hope that God will overrule it for good. God Himself, who, while not causing evil, yet permits it for reasons which we may hereafter see in His light, however inscrutable to us now, nevertheless teaches us to regard that evil as painful to Him. And how-

ever men put from them the testimony as to this of holy men of old, speaking as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, as the language of anthropomorphism in them, the sight of moral evil is painful to us in proportion as we ourselves partake in the Divine Holiness,—and the contemplation of unbelief is painful in proportion as we know God, and put our trust in Him.

The discordant din of conflicting sects and systems, mutual recriminations, mutual persecutions,—at least, to the extent of that smiting with the tongue which our imperfect toleration has not yet forbidden:—these are not less but more because of increased occupation of men's minds with religion. For the interest felt, while wide-spread, is superficial, and therefore hasty in its utterances, self-confident, impatient of contradiction, rash and unskilled to take the mote out of its brother's eye, because the beam is still in its own eye. So the confused sound that ascends even from the host of the friendly painfully suggests the thought of a Babel, no man understanding his brother's speech.

It is not the presence or absence of intellectual light that is here in question; it is the absence, or at least feebleness, of the light of love—the sense of brotherhood. No amount of error discerned in the creed of another, no amount of conscious light in our own hold of what we believe, can be any reason for bitterness or even impatience in controversy.

We are not to stop at this repelling surface-aspect

of things, or suffer it to hide from us the less obtrusive good. We desire to discern the good that is present and to acknowledge it thankfully. This is well, only let not our wishes mislead us and tempt us hastily to accept a mere show of good as good, or to be ready to excuse evil because it presents itself blended with good whether in individuals or in companies of men. While, on the other hand, let us guard against the opposite error of assuming that evil is unmixed even when it predominates.

Our deepened feeling of the importance of religious convictions has only increased the risk that this principle, however clear and of sacred obligation, should be lost sight of in controversy; and it is lost sight of even when we cannot question the actual existence of brotherly love, which, were it used as a guiding light, would have saved from such sins against love.

If mutual injustice and uncharitableness of feeling find so much place between conflicting sects and between the advocates of different creeds, we must be prepared to meet the same absence of right feeling in controversies between the friends and the opponents of religion. And it is seen on both sides:—unseemly on the one side because on it men profess to contend as the apostles of Divine love; unseemly on the other side because on it men profess reverence for the sacred anthority of Truth; for the pure love of truth, as well as the pure love of our brother men, is fair and just. Unseemly, I say, yet not here, any more than

formerly, necessarily and absolutely negative of the presence of the right mind in that which is wrong. For as a man may love his brother man and yet lose sight of what is due to love in the warmth of religious controversy, so may a man have in him the pure love of truth who yet is betrayed to hasty conclusions, and a slight and superficial consideration of that against which he contends.

These possibilities we are not to forget. But zeal for religion may be without the presence of love to an opponent, even in the smallest measure,—the *odium theologicum* having possession of the whole man; so may it be of unbelief or a reckless lawlessness of thought unrestrained by any reverence for truth or dread of error. But if we would be just to all parties we must realise the presence of a real quest of truth, even when that quest is not self-consistent, as well as of real desire to benefit others, when yet that desire nullifies itself by the harsh means it employs.

How, it is asked, can these men be one in love to God and love to man, holding different creeds, if difference of creed be a thing of any importance? . . .

2.

What offends us in religious controversy, as sin against truth, no less than sin against love, is not a new thing, and probably has always been in proportion to the earnestness of such controversy. In our time the apparent amount of the evil at least, if

not its real amount, is greater because of that prompt recourse to the press with all questions of interest which has increased so much and still increases, giving a voice to reach the public ear to men's hastiest thoughts. We seem by our use of the press to have come to think aloud in the presence of all who read, and with even less care to think before we speak than would be right speaking with our lips only and in the retirement of our own homes. This "stimulating of thought" may have some advantages—doubtless has; but its most obvious effect is to make men slow to hear—quick to speak—quick to wrath.

Nevertheless, beneath the unhealthy occupation with this highest interest of humanity—man's relation to God—we may believe that there is really more healthy thought and feeling than would seem compatible with this evil surface, more right-heartedness in the sight of God. How often is this comforting faith greatly helped by most welcome discoveries as to individuals, things coming to our knowledge which shed a welcome light on what they really have been—a light which justifies us in separating between the men themselves, what was most truly they, and what we had condemned in them. Such discoveries do not change our estimate of the wrongness of what has been wrong, while they check and rebuke that most evil habit incident to an age of controversy of attacking men in attacking error,—mistaking imputations for arguments, and thinking to discredit a cause by

abuse of its advocates. Nothing can be more unworthy of our own good cause, if such it be; yet the temptation to this error is obvious. It is far more easy to assume an evil in our opponent, as explaining what we call his blindness to light, than to do him the justice of trying to reach his standpoint to judge fairly of his error, if such it be. Besides, to hold an opponent unreasonable, and under the blinding power of some form of self, helps us to feel secure in our own position; often a dear-bought feeling of security, leaving undetected a weakness in our argument, a narrowness in our view, which a fair hearing of the adverse argument might have revealed to us,—at all events permitting an unloving feeling of triumph foreign to the pure advocacy of truth.

How are reflections such as these often forced on us even when the cause contended for has our sympathy as the cause of truth!

But even the path of charity is in such a time as this one that must be trod warily. Even the desire to do no injustice may mislead; and this both in our thoughts of individuals and of the truth itself. I believe we are exposed to this temptation which calls itself charity through lack of more Divine love—that love which while we were yet sinners gave Christ to die for us. For pure love needs no shutting of the eyes on evil to sustain its intensity—needs, indeed, no assumption of positive good, nothing beyond that possibility of good which made man redeemable.

Again, there is a seeming charity which may mislead as to right and wrong in their relations to truth and error;—the sight of abounding controversy and the too common mutual injustice of those who are engaged in it may have the effect of weakening our sense of the value of truth and dimming our perception of its relation to righteousness.

Pope's words,—

> "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right,"—

express the erroneous conclusion to which we may be here tempted. That he "can't be wrong whose life is in the right" seems an axiom. But thus used it is a sophism, assuming the unimportance of faith in relation to righteousness which it is employed to prove. If true faith—the faith of the truth—be a condition of mind in harmony with the truth of things, the mind of man is so far a mirror reflecting the mind of God. Then faith is righteousness — righteousness in the highest sense—the fountain of righteousness in all lower senses. When I speak of the mind of man as reflecting the mind of God, I contemplate, not the intellect only, but all that is embraced in man's being the image of God, what the words of Christ contemplate when He says, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Let us then not be tempted to find relief from the pain with which we contemplate the fighting for

modes of faith which Pope satirises as the employment of graceless zealots, by giving place to lax and vague notions of the relation of our thoughts of God to righteousness. It may be well, as is sometimes done, to bring together the names of men who have borne the impress of righteousness, yet whose creeds and religious views present points of difference.

But, in marking wherein they differed, let us be careful to distinguish and mark what in their thoughts of their relation to God has been common to them—the will of God in relation to themselves, the apprehension of what God is, implied in this will. A man's *real* creed—that by which he lives—the faith which determines the character of his personal intercourse with God—underlies any peace with God and conscious harmony between himself and his God, whatever the amount of that peace or harmony may be.

This real living faith, could we see as God sees, would be recognised as present wherever we have been constrained to recognise true religion; however much besides of divergent thought and opinion has drawn to itself our attention, looking only at the outward appearance. How can these men be one in love?

No meditation on the evils incident to religious controversy can be more baneful than that which leads to lax views (in reality radical misconceptions)

as to the relation between our thoughts of God and righteousness. We see men differing from each other in their creeds, and insisting earnestly, it may be, on the points in which they think differently, who yet all bear the impress of righteousness; and we hastily conclude that their belief is one thing, their righteousness another thing, and a thing totally disconnected. But not all that a man holds as his creed has part in determining what a man is, but only that part of it which is a spiritual reality to him,—a part of the truth of things as he in his spirit knows them and responds to them. To consider why such and such men are good men—assuming that our own is the Divine standard—in order to determine what part their faith has in their goodness, or whether it have any, is to venture on most delicate and dangerous ground. Could we see as God sees we should doubtless be able to discriminate between a man's creed and his living faith. But this the man himself may be unable to do. How very imperfect any approximation by us then must be. Yet I believe if we ask wherein the men in whom we recognise the mind of Christ are one in their conceptions of God, and of their own relation to Him, in those times in which they are having living intercourse with God (realising His mind towards them and cherishing that mind towards Him which is their due response) we shall recognise an identity in what they see as the mind of God towards them and the mind towards God which

is their due response. We see what is common, though we might in vain attempt in any one case to disentangle it from elements in the individual man's creed with which it is conjoined, and show that this or that point of doctrine has practically no place in his walk with God, in his love to God or in his love to man. Would not the attempt to do so be often most unwise,—might we not in rooting out the tares root out the wheat also? Alas, have men not sometimes so acted in reference to their own selves, hastily plucking out the wheat with the tares, and then contending that there had been nothing but tares only! The more weak and sickly the growth of the wheat the more possible is this rashness.

But if a man may so err as to the elements of his own creed, how much more easily may he err in dealing with other minds,—at least if he approach this work in that confidence of intellect and trust in logical inferences which make no account of our spiritual nature in predicating what fruit such or such opinions must bear; saying, for example, How demoralising must the creed of the Calvinist be!

3.

A more serious error to which we are exposed in our thoughts about religious controversies, and the large space they occupy in the history of Christianity,

* This section was written on the 20th of February, and contains, therefore, his *last words.*

is that into which we fall when the contemplation of them influences our conceptions of the relation of truth to righteousness. That relation is, indeed, in reality so close as to approach to identity; for truth and righteousness become to us one when we see them in Christ the Truth. But truth, in connection with religious controversy, under the name of creed or dogma, means rather a form of thought than that reality to which our Lord's words direct us. He is the Truth, as He is the Life; also the way to the Father, who is approached only in the Son. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Our Lord is not, in such words, speaking of a form of thought. But worship in spirit and in truth embraces the whole man, and implies thought concerning God and not feeling only —that union of spirit and intellect which is implied in knowing God, giving Him glory in the light of what He is as in sympathy with what He is, being a partaker in the Divine nature. However, therefore, thoughts concerning God in the form of creed or dogma are, so to speak, as intellect separated from spirit, there is no such separation in the actual experience of the Divine life. But familiarity with discussions in which the words which relate to the highest realities are used almost as if they were algebraic signs, tends to weaken in us the feeling of reality which is never safely weakened or suspended. Hence the possibility of lax thoughts as

to the relation of true thoughts concerning God and our relation to Him to true righteousness, and our being what the righteous God wills us to be.

I believe that error here is one of those reactions which are continually occurring. In this case, it is a reaction from dwelling on the importance of what men think rather than on the importance of what they are. Is not what we are the great thing? Is not the question of what we think quite subordinate? So approached, the fact that in the course of religious controversies we find goodness not confined to any one class of thinkers, that men holding different views —widely different even as to points to which they alike attach much importance—still bear in common the impress of righteousness; this fact tempts to the thought that, after all, it is not a matter of consequence what men think. Some line will, indeed, usually be drawn between the doctrines that have most claim to be fundamental and others; but it is a line that a wider range of vision and freer thought seems continually shifting so as to enclose a narrower circle, until at last it becomes a mere point, or rather, vanishes.

There may be profit in grouping together men of undeniable goodness who yet are associated with opposite sides in the history of religious controversies, if this be done wisely, and in view of the difficulties which our compound being, and the intermingling of

intellect and spirit in the living man worshipping God, present in this process of analysis.

Not to consider that extreme course of separating between our thoughts concerning God and righteousness, which goes beyond even the denial of the relation of the faith of Christ to the worship of God, to the denial of any relation of the worship of God to goodness—the case in which the narrowing circle has altogether vanished—I would invite those who believe that Christianity has been a gain to humanity, that the last eighteen hundred years have developed in connection with faith in Christ an amount of goodness,—*i.e.*, of love to God and love to man, for which all who love God and man give thanks, and who, in presence of this great fact, ask themselves what has been the relation of this goodness in men to their faith,—instead of considering on what men, in whom the goodness which is acknowledged has been seen, have differed in thoughts of God and of Christ, rather to consider the measure of their agreement—what, in their thoughts of God, and of the conditions of their own being in relation to God, as revealed in Christ, has been common to those in whom the will of God for man has seemed to have been most realised? And any approximation to the answer we seek will be through fixing our attention on the living men as we see them responding to the will of God—reflecting his image, and through considering what of the element of thought is combined with the element

of spirit in their consciousness. There is thought there. They are not worshipping an unknown God. They ascribe to God a mind in relation to themselves as well as themselves cherish a mind towards God. Whatever elements of conscious darkness concerning God are present hinder not this. Something they seem to themselves to know. That something their thought embraces while their spirit conforms to it. The will of God fulfilled in them is a will intelligently ascribed to God; the fulfilment in them is a response. The question as to what is common to all in whom there is response, is ultimately the question, What is common in their thoughts of the will to which the response is given? So far, the conclusion seems clear. Identity in the response implies identity in the conception of that which is responded to.

The relation of faith to righteousness, then, is the relation of our response to God,—to God's voice to us. It is thus a reflection of the Divine righteousness. A reflection which is one with what it reflects is righteousness—a living reflection from and in the whole man—thought and will, intellect and spirit.

THE END.

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